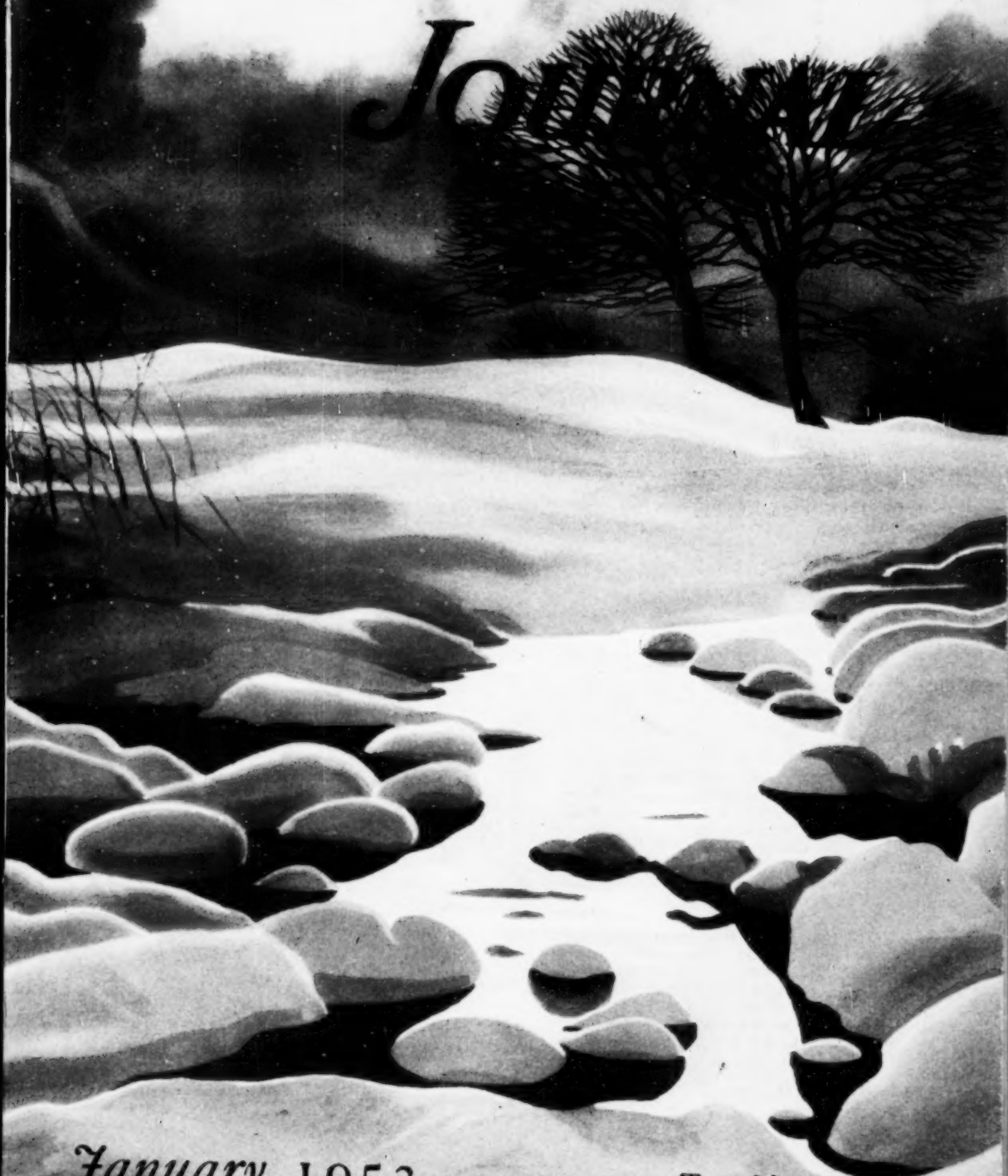


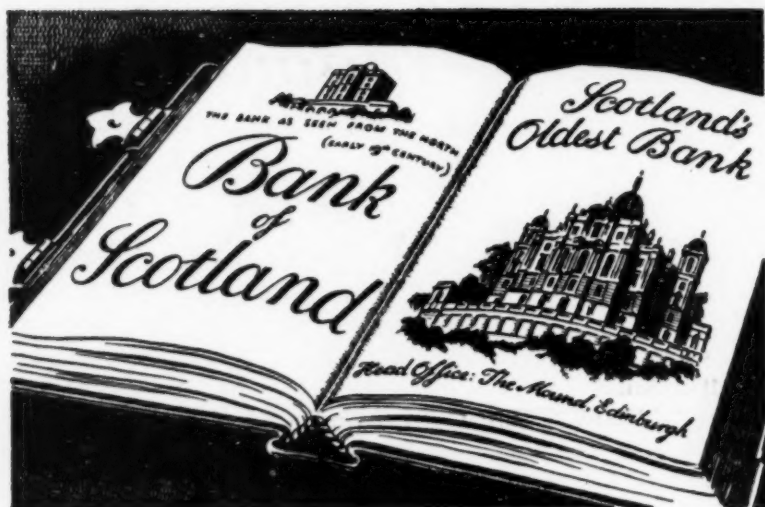
CHAMBERS'S

Journal



January 1953

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 IN THE OBERLAND

by Elinor M. Brent-Dyer

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Contents—January 1953

	PAGE
SHE LEFT ME	Mary Murry 1
CAT'S-EYES	Garry Hogg 9
SEA-COAL	G. D. R. Phillips 11
A VOICE FROM TIMON'S TOMB (Poem)	Denis Turner 12
A PAIR OF BLUE EYES	Jocelyn Joyce 13
AT THE LAST BATTLE: A Shinty Match of Yesterday	George T. Hay 16
LUNAR FALLACIES	William H. Marshall 18
THE WOODS (Poem)	Tom Wright 20
PEAT-FIRE MEMORIES: I.—The Black House	Kenneth Macdonald 25
THE AWKWARD LITTLE SCIENCE: The Award of Honours	Oliver Warner 27
GREAT-GRANDMAMA (Poem)	Peggy F. B. Thomas 29
BUT WITH NO OUTWARD MONUMENT	Pamela Hill 30
THE TRAP-LINE AND THE WOLF	R. N. Stewart 36
COUNTRY CLUB (Poem)	Nansi Pugh 38
NATIONAL FOODS AND NATIONAL PREJUDICES	Cyril Benns 39
THE GUARD OF HONOUR	C. T. Yelland 42
LIFE IN AFRICA'S NEWEST EL DORADO	Howard Fairfield 45
COMING, SAHIB!	Cyril Don 47
ALLURE (Poem)	James MacAlpine 48
THE LITTLE SCULLION	Mathew Haynes 49
THE PUN AND THE PUNDITS	D. M. S. Mackenzie 51
COUNTRY GATES	David Parry 54
IF JOY BE BRIEF (Poem)	N. J. 55
LEAVES FROM A DOCTOR'S DIARY	A. S. G. 56
TIME (Poem)	Vivian Henderson 59
TWICE-TOLD TALES: XXV.—The Art of Listening	60
SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE—A Visible Cooker-Oven. For Washing Cars. Sewage and Food Production. A Map-Measurer. About the Weather. Untaken Harvest. A Twice-a-Year Clock. A Fuel-Economiser and Smoke-Reducer. A New Lighter. A Plastics Improvement	61
CULTIVATING YOUR SOIL	W. E. Shewell-Cooper 62

Illustrations by Ridgway

TO CONTRIBUTORS—All communications should be addressed to:

'The Editor, Chambers's Journal, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2.'

Manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or by stamps or their equivalent (postal order or imperial or international reply coupon).

Annual subscription, including postage, home or abroad: 26/6 (except Canada, 26/-).

Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post.

Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh 2, and 6 Dean Street, London, W. 1.

Agents for Advertisements:

England—T. B. BROWNE, LTD., 117 Piccadilly, London, W. 1;

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She Left Me

MARY MURRY

SHE left me on our honeymoon. Left me flat. When I woke up they'd shunted us into a siding. 'Hey, Gioia,' I said—she'd asked me to call her that while we were in Italy—'Hey, Gioia, we're in a siding!' But she never answered. She'd left me.

I thought maybe she'd gone along the corridor to the toilet and I was glad to have those few minutes to pull on my pants and maybe get in a quick shave too if I was lucky, because I remember catching sight of myself in the mirror over the basin and at the same time thinking how stale the car smelt. But the water'd been cut off, and when I let down the window and looked out we were alongside a freight-train. On the corridor side an empty pair of metals led into a station with a row of platforms and bookstalls and buffets and people strolling around and sitting on benches waiting and meeting and saying hello or good-bye to one another. *Ciao*, they kept saying, *ciao, ciao, ciao*. But I was all alone on the sleeping-car. They'd all forgotten me. Even the attendant.

He should have woken me like he'd woken all the others. She must have thought he would. That's what it was. She'd woken early and dressed, zipped up her overnight

bag and stepped down on to the platform to stretch her legs a bit and take the air after the tunnel stench of the train. She knew we had a forty-minute wait here while they unhitched the sleeping-cars and regrouped the train. She'd figured the attendant would get me up in time. She was out on one of those platforms somewhere, sipping a coffee in the sunshine or choosing off the bookstall one of those shiny, high-class magazines which told you all you wanted to know about Art in two foreign languages, something to keep open on her lap during the day. That's where she was. And would she be scared when she looked up and found the sleeping-car gone and me still in it!

I looked at my watch to see how much time I had left and found that the train must have regrouped and pulled out just one hour ago. She wasn't even on that platform then, scared I'd been whisked off from her in that uncoupled sleeping-car. She left me. Left me.

I saw that goddam attendant climb back, I suppose for a check-up before the cleaners took over. 'Hey!' I shouted. 'Hey, you never called me like I told you to! You never called me!'

But he just stared, unbelieving.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

'What do you mean,' I said, 'not calling me when I told you to? Where's the train? Where's my wife?'

He said *scusi* but he'd figured I'd gotten out with the Signora.

I said *scusi* be damned, but how could he figure any such thing if he hadn't seen me get out? I was big enough, wasn't I?

Sure, the Signora was big enough, but it was difficult in the darkness—

'Dark?' I said. 'It must have been broad daylight when the train arrived here.'

'Yes, Signore, but it was still dark when the Signora got out. Back at San Niccolo.'

He grinned slightly as he said it. He was trying not to, but that only made it worse for me. Still, whatever her reason for leaving me suddenly in the middle of the night, she couldn't possibly have known it was going to make him look at me just that way. So I tried to think no more of it. 'Where's this San Niccolo?' I said.

About forty kilometres back. The train wasn't scheduled to stop there, but the signals had turned against us just as we came flush with the platform. He'd spoken to her, warned her she couldn't get off, because the train didn't stop there, and from down on the platform she'd retorted that, if it didn't stop there, then she couldn't have gotten off there, could she? I recognised that wisecrack. She'd told me some professor had made it at Reading on the Oxford express, only it was the other way about—he'd gotten on to the train that didn't stop.

The attendant swore he'd seen no one get down with her, so he'd naturally supposed I was already on the platform with the bags. He would like to assure the Signore that if for one moment he'd thought otherwise—

This time he succeeded in keeping that grin off his face. But I guess I didn't really care. I've been in the hotel racket too long, both in the States and in Europe, not to know the Latins and their weakness for jokes about deceived husbands. It's kind of reflex by now, like the Anglo-Saxons and expectant fathers. Besides, I didn't figure I'd been deceived, anyway. It was just that she was cultured and artistic and sensitive. Maybe she felt she didn't want to leave Italy just yet, maybe she looked out of the window and the moon shining down on something took her fancy. Maybe I'd been snoring again. Temperament, that's all it was. Just temperament.

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MAYBE I'd asked for it, marrying again in spite of the lesson I'd had. But she'd seemed different from Myrtle, different from every woman else I'd known. Shy and wild, like something you find growing in an English hedgerow.

Way back in the war I fell for England. I fell for the soft air and the gentle rain that made the sun all the more welcome. I fell for the lanes and the commons and the hedgerows and the cottage gardens. And most of all for the slow, calm villages like the one I knew my people had sprung from way back, way back.

I fell, so when Myrtle bumped off our marriage at Reno I liquidated my real-estate and transferred all my assets to Europe. Just to keep me from idleness I bought up a smaller chain of unpretentious but high-class British hotels. I fell, so I wanted to spend the rest of my days just selling England to my fellow-countrymen that crossed the Atlantic every summer. I fell, so I was content to pull out of big business, satisfied with the money I'd made. My former business acquaintances in the States figured I was plumb crazy. Especially when in time I became a British subject. Maybe I was. But I'd found contentment, and they were still hot on the trail.

I hadn't a home of my own. I was happy just moving around from hotel to hotel, combining a little business with a whole lot of pleasure. That was how I came to meet up with her.

I arrived at Cheltenham the day her aunt dropped dead on her, and I'd never seen a girl more lonesome and unbefriended. It made her seem so much younger than she was, just a kid. Unbefriended, that sure was the word. Lucky thing I was around or my manager would have bundled her out along with the corpse. There's nothing so bad for business as a corpse. He'd gotten wise to the old lady's money all being sunk in annuities. But the

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'Mule-tracks?' I said. 'But how does the railroad connect up with all this?'

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CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Across the bay I could see a green mountain slithering down to the sea. It looked hard enough for a man to find a foothold on it, leave alone a whole village, but somewhere among all that tangled greenery, they said, was San Niccolo.

I was a whole lot happier now. It was just the kind of place I'd have chosen to visit, more than Rome or Venice or Naples. More than Capri. Even if I hadn't expected her to be there. But I was happy to take a chance on it.

WHEN I checked in at the only hotel the proprietor told me he had one other guest, and she was English too. She was resting up after a night journey, but I'd see her at lunch. Maybe we were acquainted? Maybe, I said, and went right on up to my room to have that shave and a shower too. But all I got was a jug of warm water. The proprietor himself brought it up. He seemed to do most everything but wait at table. So I had to go in the sea. It was that kind of hotel.

At around twelve-thirty I went down on to the little terrace where they served the meals. She was there before me, alone at her table. And there was no second place laid there either. I hadn't figured there would be. I just looked to see there wasn't. I said she was different from Myrtle.

I walked up as though it was the most natural thing in all the world for me to have had to come chasing after her and find her sitting there alone on the terrace of an obscure hotel in some godforsaken village on what was supposed to be our honeymoon. I remember I clapped my big hands together as I went and rubbed them a bit to give me courage. 'Why, Gioia!' I said. 'This sure is dandy.'

But I knew as I said it it was all wrong, and I stood there with my big mouth still open, wishing it back. But it was too late, and I shan't forget in a hurry the look she gave me once she'd got over her first start of surprise. Right past me at the sea. Just like I was a shrub in a pot.

'Why, Gioia—' I tried again, tailing off some.

I wasn't prepared for her next move either.

She turned her head on that neck of hers so it looked like a flower on a stalk. 'Waiter!' she called. And when he came she said: 'I didn't think this was the sort of hotel where

unescorted women guests had to submit to being familiarly addressed by complete strangers.'

He spoke English all right, but he didn't seem to take it in the first time, not having had the advantage, like she had, of an 'A' Subscription to Boots Booklovers' Library for all those years in Cheltenham, England. So she had to say it all over again.

He turned to me, apologetic and reproachful too. 'The Signora is not acquainted with the Signore,' he said, just like he'd like to have thought better of me.

Maybe I should have said: 'Like hell she ain't. I'm her husband.' But I never did, and I let him lead me away to another table at the far end of the terrace. But he did put me facing her.

Still she wasn't satisfied. She stood right up and clapped her hands loud and commanding. Nothing of Cheltenham, England, about that, I thought. And I remembered the Spanish grandee we'd seen call the waiter that way, back in Naples. It got the proprietor out at the double. She sure was learning quick.

She pointed to me, shrinking away at my end of the terrace. 'Either he goes,' she said, just like she was Miss Ethel Barrymore in something out of William Shakespeare, 'or I do.'

I couldn't quite catch what the proprietor and the waiter had to say to this, but I guess they didn't want to lose either of us, so they did all they could to pacify her. They sure were in a spot. If she left they knew I'd probably follow her and they'd lose us both, and anyway it went against the grain to have a man guest walk out and be left with a woman. He's liable to drink more.

But she wouldn't be soft-soaped. She refused to sit down again and go on with her lunch. She kept asking for the bill so she could go. At last the proprietor said he'd make it out for her, but could he have her passport to fill out the police registration-forms at the same time? Passport. Police. She hadn't thought of that. She sat right down, twisting her napkin in both hands. 'I'll fetch it for you when I've finished lunch,' she said, suddenly very quiet. 'I don't carry it about in my handbag.' And she went on with her noodles as meek as a kid that's been scolded for misbehaving at table. Gee, I was sorry for her! Our passport's a double one, and just then it was right in my breast-pocket.

SHE LEFT ME

The next move was mine. I chewed it over while I sipped my coffee. It was good coffee, good enough to sip and savour, good enough not to need a cognac with it. But I had one all the same. I had two. I thought it might help.

I looked across at her. She was watching me too, out of the corner of her eye. She lit a cigarette, inhaled, and tilted that head of hers back, kind of defiant. I lit up too, a havana. Yeah, the next move was mine all right. I was free to come and go, but she'd have to stick around. I could leave her, but she couldn't leave me any more, all because of that passport in my breast-pocket. She knew if she demanded the bill again the proprietor'd ask her for it, and so she'd never get away. I knew she'd never think of leaving without paying. She was too English for that. It would bring her down to the level of a common thief, the operative word being common. I jabbed my cigar down hard so the cup danced on the saucer. She hadn't thought it so common when she left me.

I GOT up and went over to the balustrade to take a look at the sea. The way I was looking down on it it was inky-blue in the sunlight, with the green pine plumes and the little tinselly olives dancing all over it. I liked it. It was the first thing I'd found in Italy I wanted to go on and on just looking at. It was cool and bright. It was simple. It was happy. And I wanted to feel that way too. So I wandered out among the olives and the little fig-trees and the lemons and the lone cypresses that stood secretly about, like up-right shadows.

I climbed slowly up the terraced cliffside, up the paved pathway that was so steep it kept breaking into little flights of steps, up above the lemon-trees and the olives, and the fig-trees too, with their private, pungent odour, up past the cork-oaks and mountain-pines, until I came out into a grove of hazels and sweet-chestnuts.

I was running with sweat and so badly out of condition I had to stop and rest up a bit. The flies started troubling me, but I felt I couldn't get going again until I'd gotten my breath. That lunch on the terrace with the havana and the cognac wasn't helping me any either. So I lay back where the grass was green and closed my eyes, fanning the flies away with a twig of clean, sweet pine.

I could have slept, but the flies kept me conscious. I'd open my eyes now and then and take a peek through the green pine-needles I kept fluttering just an inch or two off my nose. All the world I could see now was flooded with their clear green shadow, lit from below by the sun striking brilliant on the sea. If I shut one eye I could see a picture, a kind of pattern, every bit as pretty as any I'd ever seen hanging on a wall—and I'd been taken to see a whole lot too many just recently. There was a sweet-chestnut leaf first, the nearest thing to me, turned away slantingly so its lean, sharp outlines caught my eye more than anything else about it. Foreshortened they call it. It was straining away after the paved pathway, and the line of flat stones fell away in turn in a flight of stone steps that dropped down over the edge, right into the sea. I sure did like the way those lines went. Perspectives she'd called them, back in the art galleries in Florence. Perspectives. I took a peek through the other eye, but it didn't look so good, so I changed back again to the way I'd first seen it. A landscape, that's what it was. A landscape. I'd like it to have been a landscape with figures.

I got my wish. I felt good, lying back there with a pleasantly full stomach and the last of the cognac smoothing out the morning's troubles. I felt so good I knew I only had to wish. And a whole clattering mule-train with two drivers hove into sight, right at the focal point, swinging one by one up over the edge from out of the blue of the sea. The figures had sure moved in on my landscape.

She was the last of them. I was glad to see her. I wanted to tell her all about my landscape, my landscape with figures. I wanted to have her lie down beside me on the grass and close one eye and take a peek at it just the way I was doing, green pine-dusk, sweet-chestnut leaf and all. I'd forgotten about this morning. I'd forgotten most everything but my landscape.

She hadn't. I could see that as she followed the mule-drivers up. All she could think about was the passport and how she could settle up and get away without having to show it, without having to lose face. She was far too innocent and inexperienced to think of making a deal with the hotel proprietor: no passport registration, no tax to pay. But then, of course, I knew all about solving problems like that. I was in the racket too.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

She looked so pinched and worried, so tensed up and out of tune with the lovely landscape she was walking through, that I began to wonder if she'd ever had the experience of discovering for herself, the way I had, just what it is that gets moving and finishes up a work of art. I guessed not. She'd got all she knew out of those high-class illustrated magazines, and her finishing-school, and what folk had told her. And she'd fallen for it. Now, I'm different. I'm a business man. I can't somehow get interested just in what I'm told, swallow it whole. I like to get round to tasting it for myself, chewing it over, savouring it. Like the havana and the coffee and the cognac.

Savouring it.

'*BUONA SERA.*' I called out to the first of the muleteers as he came up level with me.

'*Sera,*' he answered, halting his animals for a breather after the climb.

'Where are you going?' I asked in my hotel-kitchen Italian.

'Vetta,' he said, and pointed up through the trees.

'Vetta,' I said. 'Where the buses go.'

'*Inglese?*' he asked, as his buddy came up with him.

'*Americano,*' his buddy said. I could see he was no muleteer, and I felt sore with him for not recognising me as English now I was carrying a British passport. 'Me too,' he went on, grinning all over. 'And, brother, I sure am pleased to meet you.' He said it like his Italian buddy didn't count any more, now he'd met up with me.

I didn't like that. I don't mean I didn't like his being American, but his not being Italian any more. It was like he was disowning the old country, and along with it the landscape, the landscape I'd have been proud to claim for my own, because I could see by now it must have been something like it, like the way I'd happened on it, that had started up every one of those priceless old paintings and statues I was beginning to want to take a second look at now I had mine. I felt I'd something in common with every one of those dead-and-gone guys people always mentioned so reverent. I could have looked any one of them right in the eye and said: 'I'm a painter too,' just like she'd told me Correggio did, the only difference being I couldn't put

what I'd seen on to a canvas. Well, not yet, anyway.

'You come from hereabouts?' I asked the American.

'Not me!' he answered up, a whole lot too slick. 'My old pop.'

Again I didn't like it. He said it like he was excusing his old pop his birthplace, disowning his birthright. I felt sorry for his old pop. I'd like to have met him, instead of junior, and told him about my landscape with figures. I felt so mad at the youngster I said: 'I'd have been proud to have come from here.' And as I said it I looked at the paving-stones on the terrace path the mules stood kicking their hooves against, every one of them quarried and trimmed by a craftsman. Some old craftsman. Some old civilised craftsman. 'Take a look at the stones you're standing on,' I went on. 'Just how old do you figure they are? One thousand years? Two thousand? There were mules coming up and down this pathway before ever Christ was born.'

'Old!' he sneered. 'Old! That's about all this goddam country has to boast about! Old.'

I felt sorry for him suddenly. After all, he didn't know about my landscape. No one did but me. And I hadn't known about it myself until just now. And only this morning I'd felt like he did about a lot of Italy I'd seen. Too many works of art and too little plumbing. Besides, he was only a kid, and I was mellowing, mellowing fast. 'Keep coming back, son,' I said. 'Keep coming back and you'll see what I mean.'

They both grinned, and the Italian shouted to the mules. I saw they were loaded with Coca-Cola empties, but I didn't care. '*Ciao!*' I shouted after them. '*Ciao!*' And I laughed to see how surprised they were I should know such an intimate kind of word. I was just that mellow.

I'D forgotten all about her. She was standing watching the mules and the two young men fade away into the shadows of the great trees. Then she turned to me. 'I heard what you said,' she said. And she sounded surprised, and kind of grateful. 'He's an impossible young man.'

'He's young,' I told her. 'Like you.'

'I'm not young,' she said. 'I'll be twenty-nine next birthday.'

SHE LEFT ME

'You're too young yet to know how to get away from an Italian hotel without having to show your passport, ain't you?' I said.

'Is there a way?' she asked. 'How can you?'

'Oh-oh!' I said. 'I may be naïve, but I ain't all that naïve.'

'No,' she said. 'That wasn't why I asked. Truly.' And she began to walk away again, back down the pathway.

I never stirred. I just lay right back and went on fanning the flies. Then I called after her: 'Why did you ask, then?'

She turned back so quick I knew she'd only been waiting for a word from me. She flung herself down on her knees, down on the grass beside me. 'What are you going to do?' she said.

'Nothing,' I said, fanning away.

'But how are we going to get away from here?' she said.

'We?' I said. 'Don't particularly want to, but any time you do I have our passport right here.'

'No, don't show it to them,' she said. 'Don't let them see it.'

'Why not?' I asked.

Then she surprised me. 'Because this is a place I'd like us to be able to come back to.'

I wasn't prepared for that. 'Well,' I said. 'What do you know!'

Then she stopped being dignified and said in her old, impulsive way: 'I'm sorry about this morning on the train, and what I did to you at lunch on the terrace was unpardonable. But you've no idea how you irritate me.'

'Yeah,' I yawned, remembering the grin on the face of that sleeping-car attendant. 'I figured somehow that was all it was.'

'All!' she cried out. 'All! Do you know that in the last two weeks you've murdered Italy for me? Italy, all my Italy! Rome, Venice, Naples. Assisi, Perugia, Florence. You've made corpses of them all, so that I could never bear to see any of them again. Never, never, never!' And she was Miss Ethel Barrymore once again.

'Well, that sure is tough,' I said, 'cos I was just figuring on going right back and doing them all over again.'

That surprised her. Almost as much as it did me.

'See here,' I said, making room for her. 'Now, lie right back until your eye is level with that sweet-chestnut leaf. And shut your other eye.'

And I showed her my landscape. The figures had all moved out on us, but she saw what I meant. Yes, she saw it all, just as I did—the foreshortened leaf leading on to the centuries-old paved pathway, the steps dropping away over the edge way down to the inky sea. I told her about the focal point and the figures moving in on it, and she listened to me just like I was some person else, until I began to feel embarrassed, especially when I remembered who I was holding forth about art to. 'I guess it's because I never could spare the time to sit around like this before, just looking,' I said. 'Come to think of it, I can't remember ever having sat under a tree in my life, except to watch tennis or maybe polo or take tea on somebody's lawn, and it's kind of hard to notice this sort of thing then. You have to keep making conversation.'

But she still said nothing. Just sat up and stared at me, until I began to curse myself for never learning to keep shut that big mouth of mine. Especially just now. I could feel it was touch and go with us, and everything in the balance. She seemed to me to be searching about for something to say. Something that wouldn't hurt my feelings too much, I figured. And then she changed her mind and said: 'How did you find me?'

So I told her. When I got to the bit about the wisecrack she'd made to the sleeping-car attendant, that if the train didn't stop she couldn't have gotten off, she cried out: 'Oh, how could you throw that up at me!'

She seemed so sore about it I said: 'I always did think it a good story.'

'Yes, but don't you see it's not mine,' she said. 'And I passed it off as though it was.'

'So what?' I said.

'Can't you see how dishonest I am?' she said.

'How dishonest?' I said.

'I'm a fraud,' she said. 'Nothing but a fraud and a cheat and a sham. There's nothing in this whole wide world I can justly call my own, as you can.'

I wasn't sure what to make of that, so I asked her why she left me.

'I just felt like it,' she said.

'But why did you feel like it?' I said.

'I couldn't stand you any longer,' she said. 'The awful things you'd come out with, and the things I wanted to hear you say that you never said. And worst of all that terrible cat-on-hot-bricks, all-too-anxious-to-please

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

way of yours. Two whole weeks of it got on my nerves.'

'But getting out at a wayside station like that in the middle of the night—' I said.

'You're worse in your sleep,' she cut in. And it went through me like a cheese-wire.

'You couldn't have had much money with you,' I went on. 'And no passport. How did you figure you were going to get by?'

'I didn't figure.' I just had to get away.'

'Gee, how you must have hated me,' I said. And I felt mad at myself as I would have at a guy who'd done her wrong.

'No,' she said quickly, 'not like that. You mustn't think I hate you. You took me in and gave me food and shelter. Quite literally. I should be grateful. And I am.' She sighed and added: 'Anyway, I'm your wife.'

I didn't like the way she said that last bit. Like she was trapped. Like she was being distracted upon. Myrtle would have said it quite different. Like she was distraining upon me. That was Myrtle. You knew where you were with her. Right from the start. Right to the finish at Reno.

NO, I didn't like the way she said that last bit, at all. I got up and walked around a bit. I burrowed in the grass with the toe of my shoe and spoiled the greenness of it. I kicked the loose pebbles off the paving-stones down into the olive-groves below, and I flung away my twig of clean, sweet pine. It went hurtling out over the focal point of my landscape, and the landscape seemed to go with it. Landscape, figures and all. Everything went with it, every single thing I'd ever cared about or hoped for.

Then I went back up to her, sitting there on the grass, resigned, waiting in subjection with her knees drawn up under her chin. 'Listen,' I said, standing over her. 'Even a dog doesn't have to be that grateful.' I meant to sound gentle and kind of reproachful, but I was that het up I must have shouted it, rough and angry. I'd gotten like I was on that deserted railroad station. I had to get another load off me. I had to get it off me pretty quick.

But she got in first. 'Well, there it is,' she said, so still and quiet she scared me.

I sat down beside her again. 'See here, Gioia,' I said.

'Gioia!' she said. 'Gioia!'

'Well, it's what you asked me to call you while we're in Italy,' I said.

'But it's not my name,' she said. 'I'm a fraud through and through. And you know it. A fraud and a cheat and a sham.'

'Listen, honey,' I said. 'You're all het up.'

'Wouldn't you be,' she said, 'if you knew there was nothing, nothing in the whole wide world you could call your own?'

'Why,' I said. 'I got plenty. And what's mine's yours. So you got plenty too.'

'Oh,' she said. 'I'm not talking about material things any more.'

'Then just what are you talking about, for Pete's sake?' I said.

And then she said a lovely thing. I'd never hoped to hear her say anything as lovely as that. Not to me. She said: 'Your landscape.'

'You can have that too,' I said.

'No,' she said. 'That's yours, your own. I couldn't see it until you showed it to me. I can't see anything like that for myself. It's no good. I just can't.'

'I don't see why not,' I said. I wanted to cheer her up. 'I don't see why not, with all the education and the culture and the good taste you have.'

'Taste!' she said. 'I haven't any. It's all what other people have told me. Auntie, and the finishing-school, and the dressmakers.'

Then she said another lovely thing to me. She said: 'I'll have to ask you now.'

'Me?' I said.

She gave one of her little smiles, half-shy, half-mischievous, that I hadn't seen since we quit Paris.

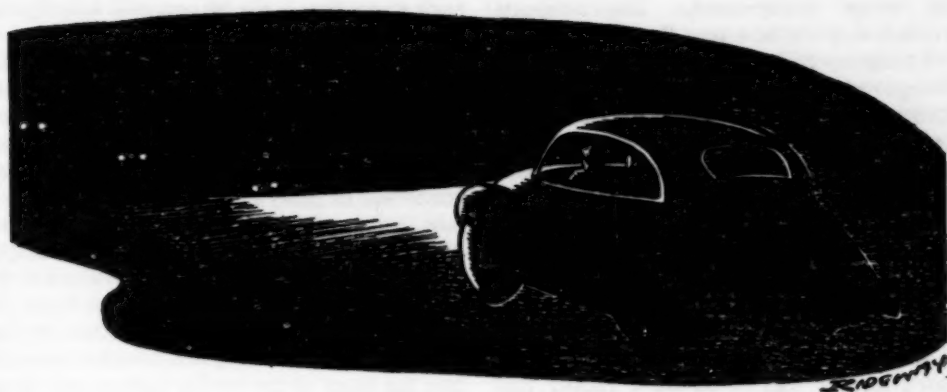
'You had no taste when you married me, though,' she said.

I began to laugh. I always did enjoy her wisecracks. But when I looked at her again she was crying.

'Even that's not my own,' she said. 'It's out of a play.'

'What of it?' I said. 'Remind me to go see it some day.'

So we went on down to the hotel again, and I fixed the passport business like I knew how, and we pretended we'd made it up and gotten properly acquainted and were starting a romance. Well, there wasn't so much pretence about it, either, I guess. Anyway, she's never left me since.



Cat's-Eyes

GARRY HOGG

IT is hard to think of any object at once so lowly placed and of such inestimable service to man when on the move as the reflecting road-stud known to all of us as the 'cat's-eye.' Barely twenty years ago it was unknown; to-day, some six million of these modest gadgets contribute to our safety on twenty thousand miles of our class I and class II roads.

The conception of the cat's-eye was the result of a mischance in 1933. A Mr Percy Shaw found himself fog-bound near his home in Halifax, Yorkshire. His car headlamps produced a cotton-wool wall of off-white fog and he switched them off in disgust. Hardly had he done so, when he became aware of two pallidly-gleaming lines ahead of him, and he knew that he was on a tram route. In the dim light of his sidelamps the rails were throwing up just sufficient reflection to keep him on the road. If only, he thought, tram-lines were universal! And then he remembered what a menace they could be to motorists, especially among the North Country granite setts, and thought otherwise. But the experience set his mind working.

Clearly, the secret lay in this matter of reflection. If it were possible to incorporate in the surface of the road a reflecting device which would respond to the minimum of

light from car or cycle much of the terror of fog would be dispelled once and for all. Perhaps the study of optics, coupled with a little mechanical ingenuity, might provide a solution? He experimented.

THE first problem, of course, was to devise a road-stud that could be laid in the path of traffic without being damaged. This meant using material that was resilient rather than resistant, and rubber was the immediate answer. The prototype of the cat's-eye, then, was a rubber pad containing small reflecting lenses, set in a massive protecting base that would stand up to vibration and hard use. Rubber being live, the reflector-pad would do its job until a passing wheel depressed it, after which it would regain its former position, just clear of road-level.

Confident in the value of his invention, Mr Shaw had next to persuade County and Borough Highway Authorities that it was worth their attention. He was given permission to lay, at his own expense, a sample length of reflector-studding on a section of road much subject to fog. In the middle '30's surveyors and road-engineers from all over the Midlands and North came to inspect this stretch of road, and there were few who

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

went away unimpressed. Their reports travelled, and within a year the then Minister of Transport had become a convert: the cat's-eye received official recognition and approval, and very soon Highway Authorities were vying with one another in their eagerness to apply this novel safety factor to the roads within their jurisdiction.

There were, of course, teething troubles, and the development of this road-stud was a process of trial and error. One of the early difficulties was to prevent the bright glass lens from becoming coated with a mud film that set solid and nullified its effectiveness. Mr Shaw's answer was to devise a rubber pad that incorporated a rubber wing which automatically wiped the reflector's face every time it was depressed; and the action of depressing the pad at the same time produced a miniature forced draught which blew away the grit and mud.

It was found, too, especially on North Country roads which had to be cleared of snow with snow-ploughs, that the rubber pad was torn out of the metal casting in which it was based. This led to a redesigned casting: a lip, or protecting ramp, or horn, now eases the plough blade up and over the road-stud assembly, clear of the rubber pad. With the advent of war and the consequent prevalence of heavy-tracked vehicles greatly strengthened castings became necessary; to-day the standard casting is able to resist the pressure and grinding power of even the heaviest tank, provided it has been accurately bedded in the road.

A further complication appeared on roads subject to seasonal flooding: it was found that moisture gradually penetrated the copper cartridges in which the lenses were set, and in time damaged the reflecting foil. So a new and much improved pattern was evolved in which each lens was first sealed in a rubber sheath and then hermetically sealed in its cartridge so that it was proof against the most exacting tests of wet weather and flooding.

THE cat's-eye, like so many useful gadgets, is essentially simple and foolproof. Its base is a casting approximately seven inches by five-and-a-half, weighing nearly eight pounds. The underside of the casting is so shaped that it is automatically anchored to the road-metal in which it is laid. The walls are over an inch thick, and four fangs engage four holes in the base of the reflector-pad in

such a way that it can be removed only by the application of a specially-designed tool.

The reflector-pad itself is a very tough but at the same time resilient block of rubber, bridge-shaped and reinforced, on the motor-tyre principle, with strong canvas as an extra safeguard. It carries, normally, four reflecting-lenses set in pairs into opposing sides, each pair being very slightly canted upwards to give a maximum efficiency at a range of about seventy yards. The lenses, a centimetre in diameter, have a dimensional tolerance of .003 of an inch only, and operate through the refraction of light. They are dowelled securely into the heart of the rubber pad so that there is no risk of their being deliberately prised out by inquisitive small boys or vibrated out by the continual passing of traffic.

The life of the casting is estimated at a minimum of fifteen to twenty years according to the weight of traffic on the road; the life of the reflector-pad varies rather with the amount of the traffic passing over it. At busy street-junctions and on main-road bends with a small radius, where the motorist tends to cross the crown of the road, pads may have to be replaced in four years, or even three; elsewhere they may last four times as long.

Like everything else, the reflecting road-stud has increased in price, and the Highway Authority has now to pay seven-and-sixpence for every one, to which must be added the labour cost of installation, which averages out at another half-crown. This may not seem a great deal, set against the formidable costs of road-building. But it is, of course, an extra, on top of the main road-building charges. This has to be borne in mind when working out the spacing between studs, and over a long mileage this is a big factor.

The Ministry of Transport recommends a spacing between studs of twelve yards, reducing to six yards on bad bends and on hump-backs. This represents an overall figure of approximately 180 cat's-eyes to the mile, or an expenditure of about £90 for every mile of road. And this, of course, does not include the innumerable kerbside and other reflecting studs. In cities, too, there are great numbers of additional studs: Leeds, for example, with an area of some sixty square miles, has over 60,000 reflecting road-studs in use.

MANY countries the world over are following the lead given by our own

Ministry of Transport. Our nearest neighbour, France, is not much interested, and Belgium, after a short trial period, went back to the traditional white line. But Holland, Barbados, Ceylon, and Palestine, for instance, though their road mileage is not great, use a surprisingly large quantity of cat's-eyes; Turkey and Venezuela are beginning to be cat's-eye-minded, together with Australia, Cyprus, and Jamaica; Canada is a very slow convert, and—curiously enough, in view of

the Americans' acknowledged passion for gadgets of all kinds—so also is the U.S.A. A 40-mile length of road near Washington and another stretch near Pittsburg have been laid, but there is as yet no nation-wide enthusiasm for this modest little metal-rubber-and-glass object which, during the last decade or so, has unobtrusively taken its place on our highways and byways, and to which every motorist and cyclist among us owes so very much.

Sea-Coal

G. D. R. PHILLIPS

I USUALLY arrive home at Hartlepool at three o'clock in the morning, after an hour's driving through the roads of South Durham, and when I come to the narrow neck of land which joins the old borough to its larger and more modern daughter, West Hartlepool, I generally cross that neck from the docks side to the side that faces the Amber Coast of Denmark.

A few months ago, in the early hours I thus arrived on the end of Hartlepool Promenade and looked at the beach. The moon was at half-full, but the sky was cloudless and the scene was vivid. The tide was out. The beach was black, coal-black—black with coal washed up from the pit-dumps higher up the coast. The right kind of tide, with the wind in the right quarter—north-east—may leave a layer of coal up to nine feet thick on Hartlepool's beach.

The black beach was dotted over with tiny lights like glow-worms—pocket electric-torches. There were hundreds of tons of coal on the sands, and hundreds of men collecting it.

Many had ancient bicycles. Across the crank they would sling first one small sack of coal, then two larger ones, and finally one big sack on top of the others. With that load they would push the cycles from the headland to West Hartlepool and further afield. Others

had barrows, into which they could get much more. The cycles and barrows were mostly left on the promenade, and the coal was laboriously brought up the ramp to them, sack by sack. Some enterprising gatherers were in pairs or bigger groups. One would collect the coal and put it into sacks or buckets, another would carry it to the foot of the promenade wall, and a third would haul it up by a pulley fixed on one of the barrow-shafts stuck through the railings. They all worked hard and silently.

AT the same time next morning I came again. Once more the beach was black, but there were no crowds. There was one acetylene-flare standing beside a lorry on the beach, a couple of yards from the water's edge. Three men were shovelling coal into the lorry as fast as they could.

I took the flashlight out of the car and went down to see the quality and depth of the coal. A large Alsatian suddenly charged. I shone the flashlight in his face and advanced. The dog retreated. Again I turned to the coal. The dog attacked, more furiously than ever. Shining the torch, I ran at him and chased him back to the lorry, where, despite the barking, the men were still loading. 'Call

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

that dog off or it will get hurt,' I cried. They were unsure of themselves, and called it off.

It was a good illustration of the conflict that has been going on at Hartlepool. The people of the town get most of their coal from the beach. My daughters, after breakfast and before school, sometimes go down and come back with a bucketful. Powdery, it nevertheless burns excellently, even when still damp: the salt impregnation helps, and there is no stone. But the local people have complained that lorry-crews have been commandeering sections of the beach and warning others off, sometimes by strong-arm methods. Lately Hartlepool Council drove steel stakes into the ground at the only point where lorries could get down on to the beach. Lorry-owners asked the Council to receive a deputation. There are sound arguments on both sides.

COAL-GATHERING on this coast goes back to the days of the great depression, and even further—to the 1926 general strike. In the 1930's I watched the stream of old bicycles laden with sacks coming down into West Hartlepool from as far up the coast as Seaham. In West Hartlepool the coal was sold for a shilling a sack. Now it is two shillings, for a much smaller sack, but still cheap. On a long hill leading down to West Hartlepool the men used to get on the saddle, tuck their feet on to the sacks, and coast down the road at over twenty miles an hour. Sometimes the front forks broke and there was a nasty accident. The police tried to stop the riding, and some of the men fitted motor-cycle forks. There were fewer barrows in those days, but some gatherers would borrow a farmer's horse and cart in return for three bags of coal.

Since the War some men have gone in for old army lorries; and a few firms, some of them in distant towns, now have fleets of lorries going on to the beach up and down the

coast. Not infrequently the lorry gets stuck in the sand and overwhelmed by the tide.

At Blackhall Rocks, near one of the colliery tips, there used to be a beach to which people came from many miles around to picnic. There is no beach there now—only a morass of dark grey mud, coal-dust churned up with sand. It is churned up not only by lorries. In recent weeks big tractor-scoops have been going down there and scooping up the coal by the half-ton at a time. It is stacked elsewhere in great mounds; and at least one firm is now chartering ships to export sea-coal. Most of it is sold to factories, which are glad to get it at £15 a lorry-load. Two firms alone are sending away up to five hundred tons of sea-coal a week each. The greater part of this coast comes within Easington Rural District, the Council of which is wondering whether to follow Hartlepool's example and stop the vehicles with steel stakes.

THE large-scale gatherers of sea-coal point out that they are showing enterprise at a time when enterprise is at a premium. They say they are not only providing immediate employment in the actual gathering and transport of the coal, but also, and more important, are keeping vital factories going by supplying them with fuel, thus ensuring both the factory workers' jobs and output necessary to the nation. They say they are beginning to bring the country foreign currency.

But perhaps one of their best arguments to present to the councillors is: If we do not remove the coal from your beaches, who will? Leave it to the local buckets, and you will soon see your beaches piled high with coal like stackyards—and will send deputations to us to come and shift it. That, however, has not happened at Hartlepool since the stakes were driven in. So far there seems to be no more and no less coal on the beach than before.

A Voice from Timon's Tomb

(Callimachus—3rd century B.C. Greek Anthology, VII, 318)

*Don't wish me well, you rascal there.
Yet if you do, why should I care?
The best good luck that I could know
Is seeing the last of you. Now go!*

DENIS TURNER.



A Pair of Blue Eyes

JOCELYN JOYCE

MY little kitten had not lived with me long before I knew that the cat that walked by himself was not a Siamese. From the first morning, when I woke to find him sitting on my chest in solemn contemplation, Simon trusted me completely. I was his universal provider, his comforter, his confidante and playfellow; and he followed me as closely as the little lamb did Mary. But it was no dog-like devotion he offered: he retained his self-respect, and I was honoured with his friendship.

It is a marvel that I could work at all during those early weeks, for his assistance was as misguided as it was enthusiastic. To begin with, washing-up baffled him; so he sat on my feet exhorting me to finish it quickly. Then he learnt to climb, and scaled me as nimbly as he did the apple-tree, to supervise the operation from my shoulder. The climax of his morning, however, was making the beds. As soon as I started for the stairs he dashed wildly ahead, his eyes black wells of mischief, to prepare an ambush under the tumbled sheets, where he waited, purring like a little boiling kettle, to pounce with a cry of triumph on my feet. Then up he reared, kitten rampant, to scuttle off, wild tail waving, back legs skidding, in search of fresh cover. When I

started to smooth the sheets and plump the pillows he clambered up to assist; and so thorough was he about it, dashing and smoothing and bouncing and plumping long after I had finished, that I was often obliged to hold him while I pulled the blankets straight.

One day I stood him on the dressing-table, and he gave a trill of delight when he saw the little cream kitten with the brown velvet ears and bright sapphire eyes and trotted eagerly forward to rub noses with a brother; but it was the cold, hard surface of the mirror that bumped his shiny black nose. He spat. So did the other kitten. Simon's back shot up. His tail was like a Christmas-tree. So was the other's. Simon flew at him in a fury, and for a few moments waged the funniest battle I have ever witnessed. Suddenly he stopped, inspected the mirror fore and aft and walked nonchalantly off. When John came home I took Simon back, hoping for a repeat performance, but he was not even interested. You cannot fool him twice.

WE introduced him gradually to the world outside; and he became a tiny tough pioneer exploring the long dusty lanes between

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the waving carrot-tops. It was a great adventure. Who knew, his stealthy approach suggested, what ogre might lurk in the dark depths of the rhubarb-roots? A snapping twig catapulted him into the air. His first birds swooping overhead flung him flat on his tummy. Yet he was no coward; for when a curious tabby called to inspect him he blew himself up to twice his size and ordered the intruder off with such a furious flow of language that the poor old cat withdrew bewildered. Simon flicked his departing tail.

When I put on a hat, he knew that I was going out and complained bitterly in his amazingly strident voice. I was obliged to shut him indoors, otherwise he followed me along the road bleating like a tiny distressed lamb. One day, returning after a short absence, I heard him, long before I reached the door, bewailing his solitary confinement.

It worried me. We were booked for a holiday later that summer. How could I leave such a sociable kitten in kennels? He was too intelligent, too sensitive. To my great relief, my mother offered to mind him. But even then, as the days passed and his forceful little personality asserted itself more and more, I found myself making mental notes of all the things I must tell her, for he was a kitten of fixed habits, and already he had established a routine that required our strenuous co-operation.

I intended to warn Mother of his climbing in particular, for when he grew impatient at my thoroughness in filleting his fish while he issued his instructions from the floor, he swarmed up my back to bellow them in my ear. When he wanted to be nursed, he scaled my front, regardless of whether I was standing or sitting. I might have been a kangaroo, for he had the knack of making himself comfortable in the most surprising positions.

I remembered, too, that his love of heights often led him into difficulties: but I consoled myself with the thought that his voice was strong enough to summon aid from the ends of the earth. Every tree was a challenge to him. 'Is that a monkey, missus?' the errand-boys asked; and, indeed, now that his face was darkening, he did look like a marmoset swinging in the branches—except, of course, that Simon's swings were accidental. Then, the long straight trunk of the apple-tree was too precipitous a descent, and we had to laugh as he clung precariously to the fork of the branches broadcasting the perils of his

situation until John offered a friendly shoulder and a collapsible trunk.

ON sunny days Simon loved to stalk the bees on the herbaceous-border, and it was this sport, I fear, which was the cause of the first of the troubles that he bore with such fortitude during his early years. For one morning I found him in his favourite spot, clutching at his chin with frantic little paws. After an application of blue-bag he gradually settled on my lap, a good but chastened kitten; but a week or so later, and disturbingly close to our holiday, a lump as big as a sparrow's egg appeared under his chin.

The vet advised me to bathe the cyst with a hot solution of Epsom salts. Simon was wonderfully good, purring loudly whilst I held the flannels against his throat. In a few days the lump had doubled its size, and I think that he assisted it to break. I gave him a crape bandage to keep the place clean, and he grew quite fond of this little collar, though sometimes he hooked his claws into it and seemed helpless to loosen them. This frightened him. It also persuaded us to relax our discipline. Hitherto, he had spent his nights in his basket in the kitchen. Now, lest he should entangle himself, we took him upstairs to bed. He loved it. Never again would he sleep in the kitchen.

After several days the lump appeared under his chin again, and we repeated the fomentations with the same result. Again the place healed. Yet Simon continued to rub on every convenient corner. The vet assured me that the trouble was over: but on the very morning when I was to take him to my mother the lump reappeared.

That was a miserable day. The vet decided to operate at once. When I asked if he could look after Simon for a fortnight he said that his kennels were full and, in any case, Simon was too delicate to board out. So, while he removed the cyst, I visited my mother, for I had no interest in a holiday now. But she insisted that John and I needed the rest. She would worry, she said, if we lost our holiday. Surely I could trust her to look after Simon. Reluctantly, I agreed to go.

When I called for Simon he was a sorry sight. The whole of his creamy front was smeared with blood and yellow stain, and under his chin were three neat new stitches. He was still under the anaesthetic when we

A PAIR OF BLUE EYES

reached home, so I put him in his basket to come round; but that was a mistake, for he has never set foot in it since.

There was a lump in my throat as I collected his things and packed them in a bag—his brush and comb, his ping-pong ball, my little fish pin-cushion that he had taken for his own, his enamel dish, and a brand-new tray for his toilet. Simon smelt like a hospital as we carried him to the car. John was silent as he drove, and I know just how he felt.

Mother had a shock when she saw Simon. I had been warned not to wash him, and all that blood and the ghastly yellow smears were frightening on so tiny a creature. But he revived quickly and was soon busy inspecting his new accommodation. He even passed a few remarks on it before we left: but nothing could remove our guilty feeling that we were deserting him just when he needed us most.

AS soon as we had started on our journey I remembered all the things I had intended to tell my mother. 'Don't worry,' John said. 'He's pretty bright. I'm sure they'll make him understand.'

But we did worry. And we missed his lively company—particularly at night, and for always at bedtime he had been wide-awake, demanding a romp. Even when we had returned from a party in the early hours of the morning he had found his frayed old length of string and dropped it on our feet—and we could never resist the eager squint of those bright blue eyes.

In bed each night I chided myself for forgetting to warn Mother about his enemies, for he had several. I recalled uneasily how I had lost him after his first encounter with the vacuum-cleaner, and saw him again, as I had found him such a long time afterwards, spread-eagled between the bookcase and the wall in a space I would have challenged a mouse to penetrate. Fortunately, I reminded myself, he had mastered that fear and treated the cleaner now with the blend of curiosity and distrust that he kept for brooms, brushes, and unoccupied shoes. But his worst terror he has never conquered—and whenever he comes streaking home with frightened eyes and flattened ears we know that in some neighbour's house Big Ben has struck. To Simon it is the voice of doom.

How relieved we were to get Mother's first letter telling us that he had made himself

thoroughly at home. But she added significantly: 'He says he sleeps upstairs.' We smiled. My parents are made of sterner stuff than our generation; but it seemed that Simon had found a way to deal with them.

'Don't you have Big Ben in your house?' Mother wanted to know in her next letter. 'Why didn't you warn me?' she scolded. Poor Simon!

Our spirits lifted when she told us that he insisted on half-an-hour's violent exercise at bedtime and that my father was becoming quite agile. Though she said nothing about Simon's wound, we were reassured by her constant references to his liveliness. Later she asked how I managed to work with his assistance—and gradually we realised that Simon had established his routine.

WE called for Simon on our homeward journey. He looked much better. The blood had gone; and the stain was fading. As it was late at night, we had but a brief report on his behaviour. Apart from pulling one of his stitches out, he had been very good, Mother told us. As we left, I presented her with some new stockings, for I knew that she would be needing them after Simon's visit. Both my parents appeared sad to see him go.

After Simon had checked his inventory of our house and had his supper it was time for bed. As I took his ping-pong ball from his bag I noticed some feathers, but I was too tired to pay much attention. I even skimped his game, I was so drowsy.

At first light next morning I woke, sneezing violently. Simon's face was close to mine, and under my nose he held two feathers on a piece of string. His squint was most pronounced. I shut my eyes and turned over. He stuck the feathers round my neck, purring vigorously. I rolled back again. He shoved them under my nose. I was wide-awake now, so I got up to make some tea. He laid the feathers on my feet and his vivid eyes met mine. There was no doubt what he wanted. Trailing the feathers on their string, I went to make my tea. It was a wonderful game.

Somewhat later Mother rang up. 'How's Simon?' she asked.

'Fine,' I told her.

'Your father wants me to tell you about his new game.'

'I know,' I yawned.

'There!' Mother cried triumphantly. 'I

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

said Simon would manage to make you understand. You're fairly bright.'

I thanked her for the compliment.

'The two of them played it every morning

when your father got up,' she explained happily.

I wished I could share her enthusiasm—but I was remembering with foreboding that my father rises incredibly early.

At the Last Battle

A Shinty Match of Yesterday

GEORGE T. HAY

THOSE thousands of summer visitors who are thrilled by the spirited shinty-playing at Highland Gatherings should not be so carried away as to imagine that what they see bears any closer resemblance to the ancient pastime itself than does the march-past of gaily-kilted clansmen to the grim trek to battle of the ragged warriors of the '45. Shinty of to-day is indeed but a shadow of camanachd, the Gaelic name for the game—a fierce trial of strength and endurance, which in the conquered Highlands for generations served as substitute for the proscribed practice of arms.

Of this shinty of yesterday the great festivals were the ball-plays, matches at which survived something of the ruthlessness of the famous combat on the North Inch of Perth. In my native Badenoch parish—to Badenoch belonged one of the clans that fought on the Inch—the last of these ball-plays took place nearly fifty years ago, between the North and South banks of the Spey on a river-side meadow where men-at-arms have gathered from the days of the Red Comyn down to those of the 51st Division. Ball-plays were held on special occasions, this one to celebrate the return of the Cameron Volunteers from the Boer War, and to the contest the whole countryside flocked—men only, of course: women in our parish were not encouraged to encroach on shinty-matches, funerals, and piping contests.

I WAS taken to the festival by a farmer-uncle, one of the players, and I carried with me my newly-acquired first caman—that is to say, shinty-club, in the hope of sharing in a minor ball-play with other small boys. The site of the play was on the farm of a friend of my uncle, and we put up our gig-horse in his warm stable. It was a stormy winter afternoon, and on the meadow many spectators and players were already busy trying to stamp down the deep snow round the goalposts. The posts, which had no crossbars, were tall, roughly-trimmed young larches cut only that morning in Glenfeshie. Nearly everyone had whisky-bottles sticking out of pockets and drams were being exchanged freely, with the result that heated arguments on the merits of the two sides were constantly breaking out, always beginning politely in English, but invariably ending violently in Gaelic.

Sheltered from a cold breeze off the river by a screen of canvas stack-cloths, four old women, present solely because of their varied experience in the tying up of broken heads at brulzies, were arranging on kitchen-tables the oatcakes and cheese, and stone jars of raw whisky, provided as free refreshments for the whole company. In front of the tables three pipers, strutting haughtily in their shabby kilts, played stirring tunes. Except the pipers no one in the parish owned a kilt, so everyone else was wearing Sunday suits, even to black

AT THE LAST BATTLE

ties and heirloom bowlers. They might well have been assembling for a funeral, only that for the game the players stripped to shirt and trousers.

The North bank was captained by the parish shoemaker, an enormous, black-bearded man; the South by a long, lean forester with a moustache emulating Kitchener's. This year there were only twenty-five a side. Very old people could remember how before the great emigrations there were often sides of sixty and over.

In a ball-play no referee was required, for there were no rules. One might score even from behind the goalposts. A specially-selected spectator—in this case the oldest man present—therefore threw up the ball between the captains as the sides faced one another in line at midfield. Throwing up was a dangerous honour, but, fortunately for the old man, the ball was forthwith struck away from his side of the line and both teams plunged after it with wild cries and whirling camans. In a flash a confused scrimmage formed in front of the South goal, and then, as the scrimmage broke up, all the players, racing pell-mell northwards, charged and butted and tripped one another deliberately and over the ball itself hacked brutally at their opponents' legs as well as at their camans. No touchline existed, and so play ranged at times off the meadow into swampy ground by the river, up a brae honeycombed with rabbit-burrows, into a clump of young birches, and along the fringe of a fir-plantation. In the hollows where the snow was deepest the ball frequently vanished and was found with difficulty. As the game swept unpredictably to and fro the spectators ran with it and at a sudden right-about had to skip aside for safety.

PLAY went on all afternoon, without end-changing. The players visited the refreshment-tables in relays, after each visit increasingly bellicose and given to smashing opponents' camans to pieces. In retaliation, blows were struck with fists or with the broken shafts, and blood showed in patches on the snow. The old women bandaged crudely with odd rags of many colours,

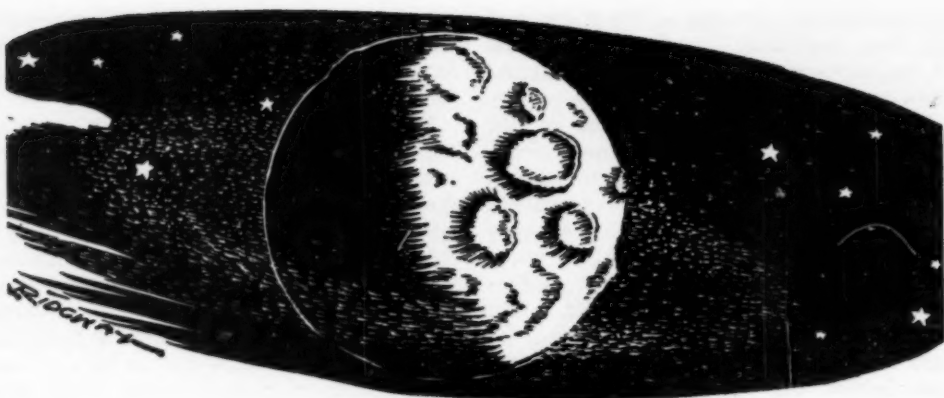
mercilessly pulling displaced finger-joints back into place and treating dangerous-looking bruises with a mere dab of pungent liniment.

Late on in the gathering dusk someone tripped up the shoemaker as he was running hard and he crashed heavily while the game roared past him. Spectators found him writhing in the snow and carried him on a field-gate to the old women. They diagnosed a broken thigh-bone and knee damage, all requiring immediate treatment by a bonesetter—in those days few people in Badenoch thought of taking such injuries to a doctor. As the nearest bonesetter was eight miles away in Rothiemurchus and treated only in his own kitchen, the shoemaker would have to be taken there. And so a long, open-sided wood-cart was borrowed from the farm. To it, wrapped in horse-blankets and padded round with straw, the shoemaker was roped, and six comparatively sober spectators volunteered to go with him. The blacksmith was also to accompany the cavalcade as far as his own smithy to sharpen the two horses the farmer was lending with the cart.

All this time the play continued furiously, but at length, solely because of increasing darkness, the South captain declared the game ended. His side had won, but they could not be piped off the field—whisky had long since reduced all three pipers to silence.

On our way home we called at the smithy to inquire how the shoemaker had been getting on. 'Real bonnie,' the smith said, and so had the others, he added, with two full jars still in the cart. After this news we were not surprised when two miles on, as we were about to turn off the main road at our farm-gate, we saw in the distance the lights of the shoemaker's cart zigzagging uncertainly up Kinrara brae, Rothiemurchus still five miles ahead.

Some days later it became known that the bonesetter, in consequence of too many drams from the shoemaker's bodyguard, had made an unsuccessful manipulation. Thus for the rest of his life the shoemaker had to hobble about with one leg completely rigid. But he was a joker and could never resist puzzling incredulous strangers by maintaining solemnly that he had got his wounds at the last battle fought on Badenoch soil.



Lunar Fallacies

WILLIAM H. MARSHALL, B.Sc., F.R.A.S.

THERE is probably no other astronomical body which has been so productive of popular but fallacious notions as the moon. Some of these ideas are so nonsensical that they enjoy their present currency, if any, only as jokes. Others, however, belong to the body of traditionally accepted 'facts,' which enjoy the unquestioning credence even of people who are by no means ignorant or unsophisticated.

A good example of the first class of notion is the idea that certain types of insanity are worse at full moon because the moon then pulls the brain up so that it presses against the inner surface of the skull. There appears to be some substance in the first half of this belief, but the pretended explanation so quickly conjures up a picture of a psychiatrist standing his patients on their heads at full moon that there is no need to use the full weight of reasoned argument to crush this little pea of fallacy.

IT is not, however, with this type of lunar, or lunatic, fallacy that we wish to deal here. These flights of the untutored imagination need only be stated to be disbelieved; the dicta we shall examine are, on the contrary, normally met with solemn nods and grunts of confirmation. Who, for instance, is bold

enough to doubt that the weather changes with the moon? Yet a little thought soon shows that this idea is as unsubstantial as the other.

The first thing to be remarked about this notion is that it cannot possibly be true over the great mass of the inhabited globe. The continental climate of the geographers produces weather so constant in its general nature throughout any particular season that there is no need to wonder when it will change. When a holiday-maker in France plans an outing a week ahead, he does not have to hedge his arrangements round with meteorological ifs, ands, and buts. He *knows* the weather will be good, although he may for a short time have to endure a passing thunderstorm. And what is true for France is true also for all of the large land-masses of the world; their weather changes much less than ours, and is much less unpredictable. Now it is, of course, true that the moon changes just as often for these lands as it does for ours. So, if the moon has anything to do with weather changes, it seems to have done us the honour of electing us to be the chief, if not the only, beneficiaries of its activities.

The question, then, is whether, in this country, the weather changes with the moon. To answer this question fully requires a great

LUNAR FALLACIES

deal more care than most people would ever think of bestowing on the problem. It would be necessary to specify, for example, what we mean by a change of weather; and also what we mean by a change of the moon. Then we should need to observe, measure, and record the required phenomena over a period of many months, and analyse the results by the proper statistical methods. We shall assume, however, that it is possible, without further ado, to recognise a change in the weather; and that a change of moon means the change from the waning crescent through new moon to a waxing crescent—what the astronomer calls a change from one lunation to the next.

Since this change of lunation takes place approximately every four weeks, the popular belief under discussion implies a regular succession of four-week periods of good and bad weather. But this is obviously nonsense. So perhaps the supporters of this idea mean that, if the weather is going to change at all, it will do so at the next change of the moon. Yet we all know that the weather changes much more frequently than the moon, and a little observation easily shows that the moon often changes without a change of the weather. What really happens is that the weather sometimes changes with the moon, and the coincidence, especially if it comes at the end of a long spell of bad weather, is seized upon and magnified, while the other, less impressive occasions, when the coincidence does not apply, are forgotten.

The residue of fact in the belief that the weather changes with the moon seems to be simply that the two changes do *sometimes* happen together. And when we think of the changeability of our weather, it would be something near miraculous if they did not.

THERE are two false notions current about the size of the moon. In actual appearance it is generally thought to be something like a plate, or, at least, a saucer, hanging in the sky. To most people it is hardly credible that it really appears no bigger than a threepenny-piece, of the small silver variety, held at arm's-length. The truth of this fantastic statement can, however, be verified simply by holding a coin at the full stretch of one's arm, when it will be found that the full moon is completely hidden by it. It is worth while mentioning that the sun is of practically the same apparent size as the moon, and that the

angle subtended by a diameter of either is about half-a-degree.

The second fallacy concerns an apparent change in the moon's size as it climbs higher above the horizon. The moon always looks bigger when it is near the horizon than when it is high in the sky. But the increase in size is purely illusory, and its real size is actually less, though by a rather small amount.

There are two reasons why the moon's disc is smaller near the horizon than it is near the zenith. Firstly, it is really farther away, by an amount equal to the earth's radius, which is a sixtieth of the distance from the earth's centre to the moon. Because of its greater distance, the moon's apparent size at the horizon is, therefore, only fifty-nine sixtieths of its size at the zenith. This decrease in size, as against the apparent increase, is confirmed by accurate measurements. Secondly, there is a small effect due to refraction in the earth's atmosphere. The bending of light, which we call refraction, results in any object appearing higher in the sky than it actually is, and the amount of the effect increases as we go down towards the horizon. It is therefore greater for the lower edge of the moon than for the upper edge, so that the two edges appear slightly closer together than they should be. Thus the vertical diameter of the moon appears smaller the nearer it is to the horizon.

There has been much argument about why the moon *looks* bigger at low altitudes, and no universally accepted explanation has yet been offered. It is a case of *quot homines, tot sententiæ*; but one opinion that has the virtue of simplicity, as well as of plausibility, may appeal as much as any. When the moon is near the horizon, its size may be compared directly with the size of more intimately known objects, such as houses and trees. Since we know these are big, we think the moon also looks big by comparison. Higher in the sky, the moon is isolated, and we see it rather more objectively.

THE next fallacy we would mention is the 'ancient Mariner' fallacy. When Coleridge speaks of

*The horned moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip,*

he is perpetuating the fallacy which is enshrined in the national flag of Turkey. It is quite impossible for any star to be seen within

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the moon's crescent, because the dark part bitten out, as it were, from the complete circle is solid moon. It differs from the visible part only in not being lit by the sun. It is conceivable that, if the moon had a sufficiently dense atmosphere, the phenomenon of refraction, already mentioned, might make a star appear to overlap the dark parts of the moon. But the moon has practically no atmosphere at all, as is shown by two observations. Anyone who looks at it through a telescope will be struck by the sharp edges of the shadows cast by its mountains. In the presence of an appreciable atmosphere, the edges of shadows are softened and blurred in a way that is never seen on the moon. Again, it sometimes happens that the moon passes between us and a bright star, and these occultations are carefully watched and timed by astronomers. The disappearance of the star is always instantaneous: there is no preliminary fading, as there would be if the moon had an atmosphere to absorb the light of the star before the solid body cut it off completely.

There is also a relativistic effect, which leads to a bending of light-rays as they pass near a massive body. This is the effect which the late Sir Arthur Eddington sought and found at the 1919 eclipse of the sun, and which constitutes one of the observational tests of Einstein's theory. But the moon is far too small in mass to exert any appreciable influence of this kind, so we must conclude that even relativity cannot uphold the accuracy of Coleridge and the Turks.

THE last of our major lunar fallacies—a list of the minor ones would no doubt be of considerable length if anyone had the

patience to search them out and catalogue them—is one which can be refuted simply by careful naked-eye observation. This is the idea that we never see more than half of the moon's surface. It is well known that the moon when it is full always looks much the same. We can always, for example, see the man in the moon, in whatever form our own particular education has presented him. But, in fact, the part of the moon's surface which is never turned towards the earth amounts to only forty-one per cent. This statement, which, of course, is the result of careful measuring, can be verified, at least roughly, by watching the large dark oval mark which figures prominently on the right upper part of the moon. This marking, the *Mare Crisium*, is to be seen at times almost touching the right edge of the moon, while at other times it is decidedly further removed from the edge.

This variation in the position of the *Mare Crisium* is a result of an apparent swinging of the moon relative to the earth, arising from the shape and orientation of its orbit around the earth. These anomalies result in our seeing, as it were, round the edge of the moon, so that different parts are at different times added to the forty-one per cent which actually is always visible at full moon.

Is there any good reason why anyone should worry about these fallacies? They are certainly not calculated to do anyone any harm. And it is doubtful whether knowing the truth of the matter will do anyone any particular good. The knowledge most of us have of the moon is generally of little practical use; some might even classify it as mental lumber. But, if our minds are to carry even a small burden of useless information, most of us would agree that it might as well be accurate.

The Woods

*The woods are silent and seem to brood,
The moon is buried behind a cloud,
I fear the dark so I sing out loud,
I sing out loud as I walk through the wood.
There's a fiend before and a fiend behind
And the voice of the damned in every wind,
For every ghoul, every demon sprite,
Will walk abroad in the wood to-night.
The night is sullen and seems to brood,
And nothing's impossible in the wood.*

TOM WRIGHT.



Chief of the 'Lonely Star'

Captain FRANK H. SHAW

'YE can gang an' bile yer interferin' heid, for a' o' mel' said Mr Angus Fergusson, chief-engineer of the 'Lonely Star.'

I bit back the retort that stormed to my lips. He was a pretty good chief-engineer—in his more temperate moments.

'Have it your own silly way, Chief.' I let it go. What did a mere ship-captain amount to in that lofty, inflamed mind? He'd drawn an advance on his considerable pay-day after we docked the previous day, and he seemed to have spent the money unwisely, as steam-saturated engineers are occasionally prone to do.

Doubtless it was an impertinence on my part. I was young to hold command of the full-powered 'Lonely Star'; Fergusson was grizzled, almost of an age to be my grandfather. Maybe it was my pride in commanding the Glasgow-Callao freighter that caused me to give myself proprietary airs. All said and done, I'd only hinted that a prudent man who had newly drawn a fair-sized pay-day might be well advised to remit the bulk of it to a patient wife who lived a couple of hundred miles away in a cottage in a Highland glen. I knew and admired Mrs Fergusson, who on the one occasion when I met her tut-tutted over my disreputable underwear and bore it

off to her grimy husband's cabin for necessary repair-work.

But Mr Fergusson had a right to his own opinions. With the elation that afflicts a man who has saved ten per cent on coal-consumption without reducing steam-pressure, he had celebrated safe return—and looked like celebrating still more emphatically. Even the shipping-clerk cocked a questioning eye at this dissolute mechanic. He glowered at his black squad as they drew their pay at the grilled counter and he waved a majestic arm. 'Ye're a gran' lot o' blackguards,' he orated. 'Ye'll a' hae a wee nip along o' me afore ye abandon ship.' Staggering like a wind-jammer in a Cape Horn snifter, he led the way to the open street. The shore-sharks in waiting clustered around him like sea-gulls round the out-throw of the galley's refuse.

FERGUSSON showed up at my cabin-door three days later—a regrettable spectacle. He was gaunt, unshaven, filthy. 'Laddie,' he spluttered, 'I've been robbed. A hunner an' fifty pounds o' good Christian money swiped aff me like—like—' He sat down heavily on my settee, forced his glance away from the bottle of mountain dew I reserved for visiting

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

officials, and burst into self-pitying tears. 'Ma puir wife'll starve!' he gulped through violent nose-blowings. Tougher than the steel he normally made his plaything, he came emotionally unstuck.

I condoled with a repentant sinner, without offering any moral platitudes. I even gave him a three-finger nip of mountain dew by way of steadying him, and he swallowed it like milk. Then I said: 'This letter came for you this morning, Chief.'

He looked at it with apprehension. He rubbed his swollen ears as if feeling the thresh of an angry woman's hand about them. 'Mon,' he mumbled, 'she'll flay me. A gran' woman, but wi' a will o' her ain!' He stumbled away to his cabin, so that a mere shipmaster might not witness his shame.

He came back on the run. 'The auld wife got ma money,' he exulted. 'The age o' miracles still bides wi' us!' He rubbed his shameful nose and added: 'Jist hoo it cam aboot has me beat.'

'Simple enough,' I explained, probably a bit smugly. 'You weren't seeing things crystal-clear the day we paid-off.'

'Ay, I admit it—I was tight as a whelk.'

'So what you pocketed wasn't your real pay-day; just a bit of spending-money. You didn't miss the balance, so I sent her a money-order. Cheek, was it?'

'Presumption'd be a better worrd. Interferin' wi' a subject's liberty! I'd earned that money the hard wey; its disposal wis my ain affair. Weel, mebbe yer mischeevous interference wis justified. Would ye lend me a pound, noo, tae drink the health o' a sensible young man?'

'Save your money. Help yourself, Chief.' I pushed the bottle towards him, and he emptied it.

Mrs Fergusson came along to see us off next voyage. She was a decent, sensible body, with no nonsense about her. Fergusson accepted full credit for remitting his pay-day, without a blush. But once or twice, as we ate dinner in the maple-wood saloon, I thought he eyed me in an unusual fashion. It might have been admiration, or as near to it as a man of his self-sufficiency could get. I claim no credit. It's never been my habit to kick a limping dog.

THAT following voyage Fergusson was, as ever, sobriety's own self. His attitude

towards the job—the engine-room and everything appertaining to it—was that of Kipling's McAndrew to his whirling machinery: the cranks and connecting-rods were idols to be worshipped with single-minded fervour.

On his usual low fuel-consumption, with no stops for engine-room defects, the 'Lonely Star' trudged south-west across the Atlantic. Monte Video was first port of call, and there we were due to rebunker for the hard run through Magellan, where ten-knot currents run every which way. Though the Monte Videan coal-merchants always handed over fat commissions to chief-engineers buying their commodity, encouraging lavish purchases, Fergusson's demands were almost ridiculously small. He personally oversaw the stokehold crew and taught them to achieve amazing results on very modest expenditure.

When we left Monte Video for the harsh passage of the Straits, it was mid-winter, the days shortening drearily; and, although there were no wireless weather-reports, all the indications promised the nastiest of weather.

Off the Virgins the wind was blowing at force 8 in the Beaufort scale, coming away in blustering squalls from the south-east, which in the southern seas corresponds to our nor'-nor'-westers. The 'Lonely Star' was behaving very well, though she shipped an occasional big sea to flood her well-decks. The barometer, on its part, was performing in a disconcerting way. Not only was it falling rapidly, the mercury was also pumping viciously in the tube. I'd seen that happen in hurricane latitudes, and it was disturbing. Still, my ship was full-powered and well-found and I had a loyal crew. I felt no cause for apprehension. I set a course to skim fairly close to the Virgins, relying on the engines—and Fergusson.

Midnight rang on the fore-castle bell. I slithered below for a deserved smoke, and, before the door of my cabin shut, I heard a crash from below. The harsh ringing of the telegraph followed. Hurrying into a slicker, I made for Mount Misery, where I saw the engines had been rung to 'Stop,' and the signal came from below.

The watchkeeper was at the voice-pipe, but didn't seem to be getting any satisfaction, and I saw at a glance that a startling situation threatened to develop. The Virgins and the ragged reefs running seawards made a dead lee-shore, and a boiling current was running reefward before the bellowing gale. That kind

CHIEF OF THE 'LONELY STAR'

of thing turns young men's hair white in an hour! Whilst I was bullying the watchkeeper with questions, excited as a young and not overexperienced shipmaster could be, Fergusson drifted almost casually to the bridge. His oil-soaked boiler-suit whipped closely round his lean body. He was rolling sliced tobacco between his oily palms. 'What's going on below?' I snapped at him. I was young and ambitious. To lose my first command this way meant good-bye to all my early hopes.

'She's jist about busted hersel', he reported calmly. 'Wad ye spare me a match, mannie?' To get his pipe alight seemed more important than the breakdown below.

'Hell's bells!' snarled I. 'Matches, and the ship drifting to leeward like a Dutch galliot! See for yourself, Chief. Listen!' The distant thunder of breakers beat through the yell and strident din of the gale. Perfect Magellan weather, and no mistake!

Fergusson snugged under the weather-cloth and got his pipe going. I remember it stank like quenched ashes, and that made me hate his imperturbability more than ever. He sniffed into the eye of the storm and looked over the side. The seas were pounding with sledge-hammer force, edging the 'Lonely Star' shorewards as relentlessly as the thrust of Fate. The rocks were maybe ten miles away, certainly not more. Fortunately the ship was loaded to her marks, and the topsides didn't get the full weight of the wind; but the current was savage. 'We've got to have steam and get her moving—as much steam as ever you made!' I raged at him.

'The face o' the circulatin' pump's split, sirr, top to bottom. That's the beginnin' o' it.' He went into technicalities, about thrust-blocks and connecting-rods, which I didn't understand. 'The wey things shape ye'd be weel tae wait for a tow,' said he, and borrowed another match.

'A tow!' I yelled. 'Hell and high-water, we'd be here a week before we saw anything likely to pluck us clear.'

'Ye'd likely be weel advised tae anchor, Cap'n,' he suggested.

'Anchor—my foot!' was my comeback. 'There's fifteen-hundred-fathom water under us, and we carry hundred-fathom cables. Those rocks are steep-to, and we'll smash-up like a paper-boat once we touch 'em.'

'Ye mean ye maun hae steam—some wey, sirr? Would ye happen tae hae a wee drappie in the heel o' a bottle, likely?'

'Once you get her moving, you can drown in the damned stuff,' I promised. 'But until you do, there's not a drop for any man aboard.'

'That wey, ye'll need tae hae steam,' he gurgled, and shambled off.

NOW, a split pump-face is a dockyard job at the best of times. In this case we should be working against the relentless clock. It was to be a case of Fergusson's skill and toughness against the pitiless drive of wind and current. The gale was nearing the top of the scale—hurricane force. The deep-sea leadline streamed to leeward as if we were galloping headlong for the reefs. But presently I heard through the din of storm various hammerings and thunderous poundings. Fergusson hadn't a sheet of steel sufficiently thick to reface the pump, so he cut a chunk out of an unshipped bulkhead door. He only had hand-tools to work with—no oxyacetylene plant, naturally enough. Working with cold metal required some muscle and brain.

Needless to say, we on deck weren't idle. But a broken-down steamer is one of the most helpless things in the world. First thing was to ready the lifeboats for the imminent abandonment. At my age—twenty-five—such a desertion seemed criminal! Those boats hadn't been lowered since the 'Lonely Star' was launched, a score of years before. They had to be pried loose from accumulated paint and rust. I streamed both anchors to full extent of cable, to form a sea-anchor to lessen the shoreward drift. I had the hands rig a sea-anchor proper from derricks and tarpaulins. Not much good. We were current-borne, and the contraption had nothing on which to bite. Every bearing I took showed us edging nearer and nearer to the deadly shore.

Having done everything possible, I went to the engine-room, a place I'd never hitherto visited, since the Chief resented intrusions by the deck department. That noisy cavern was like the ultimate hell. Hurricane-lamps jolted and jiggled on their lanyards; the portable forge was going full blast. Fergusson, stripped to the buff, was like a scrawny Pluto—chief of the smoky imps that were his helpers. Hair adrift, smeared to the toes with grease and grime, he had gashed himself in a score of places and the blood had cut the patina of his filthiness. He wielded a forehammer like a second Vulcan, and his language will not

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

bear mention. His juniors scuttled like scared mice, but there was plenty of order in their movements. Each man had his job and was doing it. They were drilling the pump-face to take the locking-bolts. I yelled to Fergusson to know how long before we could get under way. He wiped a streaming face and spat at me: 'Twa' oor at the least!'

'We'll hit the rocks inside six,' I snarled back at him. I'd lost my youth; and I was responsible for the lives of forty men and boys!

BITTER hours followed, with us of the deck able to do little to help. Occasionally, from below, I heard the hiss of steam. Once there was a minor explosion. Next time I peered down the engine-room skylight I was blinded by gushing vapour.

But how Fergusson worked! And how necessary that work was! The storm had passed the top of the scale and still increased in violence. The ship rolled as if determined to throw her funnel overboard. The rigging slackened. Solid chunks of the bulwarks were ripped away. The loom of the high Virgins land was closer than ever. And with the tormented 'Lonely Star' tying overhand knots in herself, the Chief was tackling a job that skilled dockyard men might have refused. Men slithered everywhere below. A greaser was shot into the intermediate crankpit. Had the engines been moving, he'd have been smalmed to a jelly.

There was no hope. Set of tide, wind, and current were bearing us down to certain death. In those hellish seas, which boiled among the rock-fangs, no man could have lived a minute. 'Get your lifeboats ready for a quick leaving,' I told the mate. Then I went to the engine-room again, to tell the Chief I intended to abandon in a quarter of an hour. No further hope remained.

'Haud yer han'!' he screamed back, and backed his advice with pure Clydeside slime. I returned to the bridge, and saw the black squad tumble up from below like scared ants. Thinking they had taken fright and intended to rush the lifeboats, I told Bain, the second engineer, to keep them in hand.

'The Chief drove us up, sir!' he responded.

'He's actin' like a crazy feller down there.' I hardly heard his explanation—something was happening. There was a roar of released steam. The engines began to move! The bridge-deck shivered, then throbbed, then it chattered with increasing determination. It was the most exciting sound I'd ever heard. We were actually in the backwash of the breakers, within a biscuit-toss of those jagged uprising fangs that would have split us like a rotten banana.

The drag of streamed anchors and sea-anchor fought against the ship securing way. 'Cut away that gadget!' I bellowed, my mouth sticky and dry. 'Round-in those anchors, Carpenter!'

Steam billowed up from the engine-room, the decks continued to throb; the 'Lonely Star' gathered way enough to let me turn her bow from the rocks. There were breathless moments after that; my heart seemed to check its beat a hundred times as I held the ship on an outward course; but the engines worked, and went on working. Another handful of minutes and my ship would have been cracked wide-open. We worried clear, inch by unbelievable inch. The thickness of a hair saved us—but we were saved.

Fergusson, knowing the risks of turning on the steam, had driven his men into precarious safety whilst he tended the throttles himself. He was terribly scalded, even though he had wrapped head and hands in towels. He stuck at his post like the hero he was, refusing all relief; and little by little our speed increased. We'd power enough to keep on battling. The improvised patch enabled us to reach Punta Arenas, where the repair-shops completed a job that allowed us to resume the voyage as if nothing had happened.

In all a long and hazardous life I've never known anything to equal the Chief's self-sacrificing action. We got him up from that sweltering inferno and I had him carried to my cabin, where the men laid his scalded carcase on my settee. 'A grand job of work, Chief,' I complimented him.

'Naethin' tae mak havers aboot, laddie,' said he. 'Ye saved ma pay-day, did ye no'? Weel, maybe it rates a wee drap o' Scotch. I'll tak' it neat, if it's a' the same tae you!'



Peat-Fire Memories

I.—The Black House

KENNETH MACDONALD

AMIDST all the discussion going on in the press and at local authority meetings about houses it is interesting and delightful to recall the old Black House, or *An Tigh Dubh*, as it was called in Gaelic. Those of us who had experience of it have most pleasant memories of its warmth and its comfort. Measured, of course, by the modern yardstick it was crude and unhygienic, but there were aspects of it which no yardstick could measure—its open door, its warm welcome, and the boundless hospitality of its people.

It had the big advantage that it could be built by oneself or with the help of a few neighbours in a day or two. No application was made to the landlord for a feu, or to the Dean of Guild for his approval. The common was communally owned by the crofters, and they rarely raised any objections to members of their own village having a share of the common pasture. The labour and the material were more or less on the spot, and if the elements were kind, with plenty of storms, ample bits of timber could be washed up on the shore. That might sound unkind from a seafaring community, but much of house-building in the past in the Isles depended

on flotsam washed up on the seashore after storms.

NOW that the material is assured, let us see how the black house was put up. It was easily built and contained, as a rule, three rooms—the *seomar* or *culaist*, the best room; the kitchen, where the day's work was done; and the *todhar*, where the cattle were kept. There were two partitions or *talans* separating the rooms and a door leading from one into the other. There was one main door, usually in the cattle end. When one entered, the cattle were on the right and you turned left into the kitchen, or vice versa. Generally there were two windows, one in the *culaist* and one in the kitchen; they were on the inner side of the wall, which was about five or six feet thick. The walls consisted of an outer and an inner wall of stones with trampled earth in between. As the windows were set against the inner wall, it was practically impossible for the sun's rays to shine into the house.

The rafters carrying the sarking-boards, turf, and thatch rested on the inner wall, leaving a path about five feet wide round the

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

top of the wall. A luxuriant crop of grass grew on this path, and at certain times of the year it was not uncommon to see a sheep or two grazing unconcernedly on the roof. After a new covering of thatch had been put on, the hens found an odd grain of oats among the straw, particularly if it had been badly threshed, as was often the case in the days of the *suist* or old flail. But whatever privileges the sheep had, probably because they seldom ventured beyond the path, the hens had none; there was no quarter for them, as they would ruin the most beautifully laid thatch in a very short time.

Before the thatch was put on, the roof was covered with *sgraths*, or thin layers of turf, about two feet square. They were applied like the slates of a house. In the days of the flail, the thatching bundles were more easily made, as the straw was lying in the same direction, just as it was gathered in the sheaf; but, with the introduction of the threshing-mill, the straw, of course, was all mixed up, and had to be drawn before thatching. The drawing consisted of taking two armfuls of it and drawing it apart, putting the ends together, drawing again, and repeating the operation until the straw was all lying in the same direction. The drawn straw was laid on from the eaves upwards, and spread outwards, the point of one bundle overlapping the heel of the previous one, and so on row by row until the rounded ridge was reached. Sometimes rushes and the shaws of potatoes were used. Then came the roping. In the old days rope of straw only was used, but later it gave way to manufactured rope, known in Lewis as *sioman Thearlaich* or Charlie's rope, because Charlie's shop was the only one at that time that stocked it. The rope was passed back and fore over the ridge at intervals of about a foot and firmly anchored at both eaves with a stone about the size of a brick. The anchors lay in a line about a foot above the eaves.

There was no chimney. The fire was in the middle of the floor, and the smoke had to find its way out through the thatch. A piece of stick, which served as a belaying-pin, protruded through the straw at the extreme ends of the ridge. The job looked nice and trim when the eaves were clipped straight with the sheep-shears.

The results of a bad threshing could be seen the following spring, when a crop of green oats appeared through the thatch. This was

a bad job and caused a leaky roof. Nothing much could be done with it. If it was pulled, it left a leaky patch, and if cut, it left a guide for the rain to seep through. So usually it was allowed to remain, although it gave the house an untidy appearance.

WHERE the thatch was left undisturbed, and where there were several coats on, the black house was as tight as a bottle and exceedingly warm. But it was customary in many villages to strip the thatch off annually for manure. This meant a new thatch each year, and also a leaky roof. It was amazing the contentment with which the inmates accepted the discomfort and unpleasantness of the dripping thatch. It was treated as a joke. Each drop was as black and as sticky as treacle, and wherever it fell it left its mark. Folk just adjusted themselves between two drips and hoped that that spot would remain dry. One old crofter who was suffering these conditions very patiently at last got up and went outside, commenting that it was better outside than in, as it was at least cleaner outside. Another was heard to say his house was like a watchmaker's shop last night, with a tick here and a tick there all over the place. And so it went on, discomfort accepted with good humour. The beds were often closed in on top with wood to throw off the rain, but I have heard of some who had an umbrella over them all night in bed. The old order changeth, but the passing generation agree that, with all its discomfort, there was something very pleasant about the life in the old black house.

The cattle lived in the far end and were tethered to an upright post along the wall. Whenever the cows heard the rattle of pails in the kitchen they knew that feeding and milking time was near, and their deep quiet lowing could be heard all over the house. During the winter, the cattle seldom got out and the manure was not removed; it was just levelled out so as not to accumulate in one place. This, along with the daily bedding of turf and straw, raised the byre floor higher and higher until the animals' backs were only a few feet from the roof. In the springtime all this manure was cleaned right down to the floor and used on the croft. The end of the byre was boarded up in such a way that, when the boards were removed, the cart could be conveniently filled at ground-level.

THE AWKWARD LITTLE SCIENCE

At the byre end a hole was left in the thatch just above the wall top, where the hens went in and out. A long spar was placed immediately inside, which served as a perch for them. They roosted there in one long row and were

kept quite warm by the breath of the animals. The "cock's shrill clarion" heralded the dawn. And once one started, the defiant note was echoed from house to house right through the whole village.

The Awkward Little Science

The Award of Honours

OLIVER WARNER

WHEN, in the earlier part of the War, an experienced friend heard that my work was shortly to be concerned with the administration of Honours, he said reflectively: 'It's an awkward little science.' Perhaps he was thinking of Colin and Claude, those two young officers of the First World War, in C. E. Montague's story *Honours Easy*. They were so clever at collecting decorations of many hues (behind the lines) that 'they looked most beautiful, with three full rows of ribbons apiece, like Commanders-in-Chief, and people turned round to look at them in the street, marvelling that men so young should have had time for so much valour.' Montague's satire was stinging, and to some extent justified, but everyone knew that the matter had since been cleaned up.

For all that, many times, in the years which followed, I thought how nearly right that friend was. 'Awkward,' at times certainly, but, if Honours had been truly a science, the characteristic might not have been evident. There had, indeed, been attempts to rationalise Honours, but, from the very nature of the case, the attempts could not go quite far enough.

HONOURS, broadly speaking, are recognition by the Sovereign of 'exceptional service to herself or to the country. They may

be bestowed for courage, or for zeal. Ideally there should be no room for doubt as to the precise reason why a man or woman wears a particular ribbon. But there sometimes is.

Take, as an instance, the three brothers Keepsake, who are in the Army. All three possess distinctions belonging to the Order of the British Empire, which was established by King George V. John, the eldest, is a Lieutenant-Colonel. He was awarded his O.B.E. for devotion to duty in his chair at the War Office, where he supervised supplies. Tom, who is a captain, got his M.B.E. as a subaltern, for mine-disposal, than which no occupation could call for more steady-nerved fortitude. Lawrence wears a kindred ribbon. It is that of the Medal of the Civil Division. Lawrence is a Warrant-Officer now, but in the War, as a lad of seventeen, he had a spell in a Merchant Navy fore-castle, and was decorated for his 'splendid example' (I quote the *Gazette*) after his ship had been shelled to pieces by a raider. He, with twelve other survivors, spent six days in an open boat in the North Atlantic.

Father Keepsake is a member of the same Order, but he has an old-pattern ribbon. He made a lot of munitions (and money) in the 1914-18 war, when the Order had a less discriminating way with it than it has now. He never refers to his distinction, and his sons respect him for that.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

An uncle, Sir Stephen Keepsake, also wears the ribbon. He is very lofty, for he holds the Grand Cross. He was, before he retired, an eminent administrator, and as a matter of fact he had several promotions, beginning as Member, then proceeding in turn to Officer, Commander, and Knight Commander. It is his view that his nephew Tom should have been given the George Medal, and Lawrence too. This would probably have happened indeed, had their service been even a fraction more heroic than it actually was.

As a matter of fact, Tom's superior officer, in charge of his particular branch of mine-disposal work, got the George Cross, but, alas, posthumously. It was the only recognition which could have come to him for the final service he rendered, except a Posthumous Mention in Despatches or King's Commendation. If you are killed doing an act of courage in war, there is nothing between the highest and the lowest in the way of Honours which may be recommended. The highest includes the V.C., the G.C., and the Albert Medal. If it were otherwise, so the theory runs, sentiment would enter into recommendations, and the brave dead be preferred before the brave living. But many a Posthumous Mention is the equivalent of a decoration which would have been bestowed had the subject lived.

THE 'science' my friend referred to lies partly in what can be deduced from looking at a man's ribbons. I found as a boy, in the First World War, that you could read a lot of personal history from any given array of colour. It was different, to begin with, in the Second, since there was at first little ribbon; but then came a sudden rash. It broke out after the North African successes at the end of 1942. It was partly the result of inter-allied competition. The Americans were apt to arrive in Europe far from drab as to the bosom, even though innocent of active service. They departed like miniature rainbows. Let no one be deceived into thinking that Honours are in essence a form of feudal survival, in face of the fact that no two nations have a more bewildering variety of awards than the most unfeudal U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.

The only mediaeval part of the business is in fact titular, and I for one find this part of the charm. I like the sound of a Knight Commander, even if he only leads battalions of paper files; a Dame Grand Cross must

surely be a splendid personage; while who would disdain Companionship of the Bath?

Honours were at least *apportioned* scientifically in the last war: there was a maximum of so many allowable, to so many operational personnel. The ratio was strictly observed. In the Admiralty there was occasionally a number in hand. The Army, certainly in the later stages, used most of their quota, while the R.A.F., who dealt in collective courage night and day, felt the need of a larger number, and who could blame them? At one time the R.A.F. lacked an operational award for 'other ranks' between the V.C. and the D.F.M., so they asked to be allowed to use the naval C.G.M. Very rightly, they recommended it sparingly, for it is indeed a high distinction.

In ship and large aircraft it is harder to win *individual* than corporate glory, and I once worked out that only one C.G.M. was given in the Navy to every seventy D.C.M.s (the corresponding medal) in the Army. I believe the R.A.F. scale to have been much the same as the Navy. A bar to the naval C.G.M. has, I believe, only once been given, which makes it rarer than a bar to the V.C. The occasion was in the First World War, and the distinctions were actually won in land service with the R.N. Division. I do not think that any man has won both the C.G.M. and the D.S.M., though I once saw a youth of about eighteen walking with his girl down the Strand in fore-and-aft rig wearing the two ribbons. I wonder how long he got away with it.

'Eighty per cent risk of death' was held to be necessary for winning the V.C., and, I think, the G.C., which is given for correspondingly brave service not in the direct face of the enemy. Had the G.C. been invented when that intrepid naval officer took the first magnetic mine to pieces, he would doubtless have got it. 'A V.C. incident three times over,' I have heard people say of his act. Actually, the Commander in question was given a D.S.O., possibly the only one bestowed for land, or at any rate for mud-of-the-estuary service in Britain during the War. He ought to be allowed a special emblem on his ribbon.

THE late R. M. Y. Gleadowe, my former chief, who designed the Stalingrad Sword of Honour, and knew more than most people about distinctions, was always anxious that the Albert Medal for saving life at sea and on

THE AWKWARD LITTLE SCIENCE

land should not lapse into disuse. There were actually some cases of extraordinary fortitude rewarded by it, the one I best remember, that of John Henry Mitchell, being gazetted as follows: 'On 27th September 1940, Chief Engineman Wedderburn fell into the sea between two trawlers in harbour. He could not swim, and was soon unconscious. An unknown seamen, who jumped in to save him, was soon in difficulties. Mitchell, hearing his shouts, clambered over a vessel to the quay, ran 100 yards, climbed across two other ships and jumped into the water. He seized Wedderburn, who was sinking, by the hair, and held up the other man until a rope was passed down from the trawler. This he secured with a bowline round the now helpless seaman, using one hand, while he supported Wedderburn by treading water until a pilot ladder could be lowered. He made the rope fast round Wedderburn, and steadied him as he was hauled out. He had been in very cold water for thirty-five minutes, and was unconscious when rescued.' No thriller writer would have dared to invent an incident quite like that, and I have often thought that John Henry Mitchell, a seaman of the Reserve, must wear his strip of blue and white with a very special air! The Albert Medal is not only named after but was also actually designed by the Prince Consort.

Many commanding officers were as chary in recommending their people for award as others were forthcoming. The first sort argued that, in a ship, it is the deuce to pick out individuals, particularly after a successful action; the second, that anything that may help the morale of a unit is to be encouraged. But here an 'awkwardness' arises: for every decoration awarded, with resultant pleasure, how many disappointments are there among those who did not receive one, and felt they should have done?

If there are heartburnings over gallantry, is this also so with chair-borne distinctions? Perhaps. A lot of talk goes on among senior gentlemen in clubland at the half-year. Perhaps Lord Melbourne, or whoever it was, was right, and that if you can't win the V.C., which nobody seems to grudge its holders, then the K.G. is the thing, since 'there's no damned nonsense of merit about the Garter.'

Meanwhile, the most eminent living Englishman has four initials, O.M., C.H., after his name. Although you can't be an O.M. without stature, or even a C.H., numbers are misleading. For instance, there is a flag-officer on the active list with twenty initials after his name, just to make the 'science' a little more confusing, and there may be others with still more, though I doubt it. Mercifully, there are now no Claudes and Colins.

Great-Grandmama

*I used to stay, when I was small,
At my Great-Aunts', where on the wall
A painting hung, I loved to see,
Of their Mama—Great-Gran to me.
It shewed her, yet unwed, a lass
With dimpled cheeks and hair a mass
Of wind-swept curls—
And oh, how much I liked the look
Of Miss Eliza Easterbrook.*

*Though just a country maiden she,
While quite a thriving townsman he,
Great-Grandpapa, the very day
That first he saw her, Aunts would say,
Took scarce a twinkling to decide
That only she could be his bride,
And soon she was—
Which shewed that he, too, liked the look
Of Miss Eliza Easterbrook!*

PEGGY F. B. THOMAS.



But With No Outward Monument

PAMELA HILL

ONE London evening in the summer of the year 1559 a man was making his way down Wood Street to the house of a certain friend. He was worried about the friend. Of an evening, particularly so fine a one as they had now, it had been the custom of himself and Master Young to meet at Paul's Green for a friendly game of bowls, and afterwards a draught of ale, and a talk at the day's end. It was a fitting occupation for them both, being bachelors and thereby free to make their way leisurely homeward, untroubled by any prospect of recrimination about the lateness of the hour, or the frivolity of their pursuits. Moreover, Master Young was an easy companion, with an old-fashioned respect for Master Latham's added years, a way of listening to his stories, and a nice appreciation of the touch required to set the bowls spinning so far, and no further—a delicacy, one might suppose, imparted to him by his trade, which needed precision and care enough, for he was the Queen's master-glazier.

But Master Young had not been seen or heard of for some days, and on this latest evening of his solitude Latham, who was a wax-chandler, had taken it upon himself to

set out from his own house in Maiden Lane to Young's lodging to inquire if there were anything amiss, or if his friend were ill. 'Never, save for Sundays, did he miss before,' he muttered, and walked on.

Lancelot Young's house was of the new fashion, having been built less than seven years—erected, as Latham could recall, in the late young King's reign. The timbers were freshly varnished, the plaster-work scrubbed white. The walls, as one could have seen during the daytime, were by no means dribbled down with slops having been thrown from the upstairs windows, for Master Young was fastidious, 'more so,' mused Latham, 'than many of those in high places; and as a result there are those who would mock, did I allow it.' His chest swelled out with the consequence of his own protectorship, at the same time denying a feeling that there were many things about Young which he himself did not understand.

He mounted the steps in the dusk, leaning his hand against the wall on a slope somewhat precarious, for the lamps were not lit yet. Knocking at the door, and waiting, it occurred to him that there might be nobody

BUT WITH NO OUTWARD MONUMENT

at home; the door, securely fastened, showed no light under it, and inside there was silence. 'He has kin at the Wells,' Latham thought. 'Something may have befallen there.' If that were so there would be naught to do but go home again. He waited, while the scent of a lilac-tree, unseen in the garden behind the house, came faintly and unnoticed to his nostrils. At the second knock there were footsteps, and a voice.

'It's I,' called Latham in answer, 'Godfrey Latham. Is all well with you?'

One could see a faint beam of light growing, as of a candle. The steps came slowly to the door. The lock scrabbled and Latham had a swift impression of Master Young in his shirt-sleeves, one hand shading a candle. Above the light his face looked scared and pale. 'Latham?' he said. He stopped uncertainly. It seemed that he was in no great haste to invite the other in.

'What's amiss?' asked Latham. 'I'd thought to find you abed.' He made as if to enter, but Young, perhaps unconsciously, barred the way. They stared at one another.

'The servants are away,' said Young lamely. He turned and began to trim the wax from the candle with one finger. It was the action of a man who knows very little of what he is doing.

Latham's eyes narrowed, and suddenly he laughed. 'You give me not overmuch welcome. If that's the way of it, I'll go back along the road I came.' His large face bore a dawning perplexity. 'I thought,' he ventured, 'when you were not at the bowls—'

'I have not been well,' said Young defensively. His eyes raised themselves with an effort to the other man's face. 'Don't think I am not grateful. It was good of you to come, but I—'

'What the devil's the matter with you?' said the Chandler roundly. He was once more Godfrey Latham, not to be done down. He had forgotten his hesitation of a moment ago. Now it was as always between them, he the moulding force and Young wax in his hands. He would not remember the earlier episode. He moved forward ponderously. 'I can see for myself you are not your own man. My bones are not so young I can stand here. Let's inside.'

'The room is unkempt,' Young muttered. 'The servants are away, as I have said.' He had retreated before the big man's oncoming figure.

When Latham let out a great roar of laughter he winced. 'By the powers, you have a wench in there! Why had I not thought of that? Well, when I was your age was it not the same? God curse me for a fool.'

'No,' said Young again, almost violently. His hand, flung out to ward the other off, dropped again. He shrugged. 'Come in, then, if you will,' he said. He turned, still carrying the candle.

Latham followed. He was no longer occupied with the problem of his lack of welcome. He wondered what had happened to Young's manservant. 'His master's not been shaved,' he thought, 'for five days at the least.'

THE room to which Young led him was dark, and the candlelight did little to improve it, being set by the wall, so that the far side of the chamber was in shadow. Lancelot Young drew a stool forward and motioned to his visitor to seat himself. Latham did so, at the same time aware of a mounting uneasiness. It seemed to him that Young's eyes glittered oddly. It might, he thought, be an effect of the light. 'I'm glad to see you,' said Young suddenly. He had settled himself on a bench at the other side of the table, and leant with elbows upon it, searching the other man's face. After a moment he smiled. 'You are an honest man, a practical everyday man. I think you can help me.'

Latham bridled a little. 'Who would put bread in my mouth if not I?' he said. He turned the thing over in his mind. Why should he resent it? 'It's not women with you, it's ale,' he grumbled. 'Nay, but I'll help you—if it can be done. What troubles you?'

The glazier smiled wryly. 'It may be as you say—ale.' He rose quickly, pushing back the bench. 'We need more candles,' he muttered. His face, with the smile gone from it, had fallen into weary lines again.

Latham forestalled him. 'For God's sake let us have this out now if at all, and have done with it. This light will serve.' He reached out firmly, grasping the pewter candlestick where it stood by the wall. 'His hand shakes,' he thought, 'as though he had an ague.' The idea had come to him, if his housekeeper would contrive it, of taking Master Young back with him that night to his house in Maiden Lane. He was not in a state to be alone.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

The light flared in Latham's raised hand over the room. Master Young's fingers gripped hard on the table's edge. 'No, no—' he began. The shadows leaped on the wall.

'What is it?' asked Latham, and set the candle down, so that the shapes were stilled. He went over to the glazier and grasped him by the shoulders. 'Sit down again,' he said. 'I am thanking Providence I came to-night. Tell me, and keep nothing back. There is naught so bad but that some remedy may be found for it.' Latham returned to his own place, rubbing his hands together in a way he had.

The other looked at him strangely. 'Some remedy?' he said. 'It's too late for that. I have that here, I will show you.'

'Have you a murdered man, then, in your house?' Latham joked. 'Mayor's a friend of mine. I'm flying in the face of the law for no man.' He watched, tolerantly, the restless fidgeting movements of Young at the other side of the table. Was this the same precise young man who had played at bowls?

Young passed a hand across his eyes. 'Ay, so I think,' he answered.

Latham stared at him. His ruddy face had grown pale. He laughed, not too easily. 'I had taken you in earnest,' he said.

The glazier rose and went to a chest which stood by the side of the bed. Having opened the lid, he knelt in front of the chest. It seemed to Latham that he took a long time. 'Here, then,' he said at last. He came back into the light, bearing an object wrapped in a linen napkin. He laid it down on the table, where the full light of the candle would fall upon it.

Latham drew in his breath. It was a human head. He heard his voice speak at last. 'What have you done, in God's name?'

IT seemed to Latham that he must have sat for hours there, looking at the head. It was that of a young man. He made to rise, feeling his limbs stiff. The candle flickered, so that the mouth seemed to smile. 'How long has he been dead?' Still it did not sound like his own voice speaking. This was himself, Godfrey Latham, chandler, the Mayor's friend, a man respected in the City, alone in a house with a madman and a murdered head. For the moment he did not know what to do. Such a thing had never happened to him before.

Young laughed lightly, as though it were a thing of no moment. 'Nigh on fifty years.' He was regarding the head, smiling. His fingers drummed on the table. Latham pushed back his stool. He could feel the blood in his throat hammering wildly, in time to the tune of Young's restless fingers. Young glanced up idly. 'Sit down,' he said to him.

'No, I'll not do so. How came you by that?' Latham sank down, in spite of himself, unable to keep his eyes from the face. He could not have told what held him; the smile, perhaps, if it were not a trick of the light, so that one could swear almost to have seen a glimmer behind the shut eyes, as if— The hair was long, and red.

Young laughed softly. 'Has he charmed you, too? You, too? Dear God, I've sat with him here, looking at me thus, night after night—'

Latham drew a corner of the linen napkin across the face. 'Let be,' he said harshly. 'How came you by it?' His voice ran on. Anything, his mind told him, rather than silence again, and that smile. 'Answer, and then we'll get the rest dealt with, if we may.' He would not look again on the face, he thought. An ill thing if his five wits were to go. Two madmen then instead of one, and a dead man between. He looked towards Young again, striving to keep his voice normal. 'Leave it covered,' he told him. 'It is not a decent thing to look on the face of the dead thus, as though— Fifty years, say you? That is a thing scarce credible.'

'I know of it, and who he was, and how he died.' The other spoke dully. 'No, it was not . . . a decent thing . . . that they did there.' He talked on, smiling sometimes, his fingers caressing the head where it lay. 'Did you not mark the spices, how sweet they smell? There's no miracle. He was never a saint, in the days when saints were the law. He was embalmed, and cased in wax, and the whole lapped in a lead coffin. That was after they brought him into England, with an arrow in his throat, and other wounds.'

'Other wounds?' For the life of him Latham could do no more than echo. It was a revelation to him, as this whole grotesque experience, never, he swore, to be repeated to living man, to be forgotten as rapidly as his convenient mind would obey. 'He was a soldier, then?' he said presently. Into his understanding had come the knowledge that

BUT WITH NO OUTWARD MONUMENT

Young must be humoured. A soldier, who had died in battle.

'A soldier—and a king.'

LATHAM heard himself laughing. The sound cast itself back at him decently from the walls. 'A king!' he said. 'What king would they suffer to lie unburied for fifty years?'

'He was a king—the king of Scotland.'

'Ah...' A vision of a heathenish country, of caves and stones, came to the chandler's reckoning; somewhere that was never visited, and that few men had seen; the natives there ate, they said, human flesh, and good Englishmen perished in the north every year keeping the thieves at bay on the Border. One heard little enough, down here. The King of Scotland... It was to be supposed they had once had a king. There was a child, now, a girl; a queen of theirs, in France. She was said to be a rival for Queen Bess's throne. How was it he knew so little of it? 'There were wars there,' he said uncertainly. His eyes moved against their will towards the thing on the table. 'Did he,' he ventured, 'die in one? Few of them, as I hear it, die in bed.'

'He died in a battle in the north.'

'Ah, a battle, a battle. On our ground.'

'On our ground, but it was not his will to fight. But he fought bravely. He was in the front line when they found him, a lance's length from the English commander. All his lords were dead round him. They followed wherever he would lead. Every man on that field fought till he died. There was no retreat.'

'Were you there?' sneered Latham. He questioned the name of the battle, beginning to feel his words obey him again. Presently this thing would pass, and then he would do what had to be done.

'Flodden. A place in the north.'

A little draught stirred in the room, bending the flame's tip slightly. Latham saw nothing of it, being occupied in recalling an old name, a name heard when he was only a boy, a child, scarcely capable of remembering. 'Flodden,' he said aloud. The word had a dead sound. He began to see the images clear in his mind. A bonfire lit in the street, and merrymaking, at some news. What news? And there had been sadness also because of someone who had not come home.

He recalled himself strictly to the present.

That was over now, whatever it had been. There had been wars since, would be again. The sound of marching feet died in his mind, and the vision of armed men. In any case he knew nothing of it. The thing now was to take hold of Young so that he did not run mad.

'You care nothing for it,' said Young passionately. 'But I, when I learned of it, could think of little else.'

'You learned of it?' said Latham. 'Where?'

'The secretary to Her Grace's secretary, he showed me things. They are still there, all the letters, for any who care to read. His letters, striving for peace, to King Harry the Eighth. It was a golden age in Scotland when he was alive, before King Harry's time, a little. They—the Scots—were greater than we. They had printing-presses and schools and builders and teachers of medicine, and great tourneys where every man could try his skill and he—the king—would give a golden weapon to whomsoever won a prize. He loved mock war, but not real war. He almost gave his honour to avoid real war. And when he married the King of England's daughter they had free wine running in the streets. It was thought a great thing for the countries to be at peace. And there were other things. He had great skill with herbs, this king. He used to heal such of his subjects as came to him with ills, and often he would go out among them like any common man, which is why they loved him. He was always ready for any new thing. Once he made a flying machine of feathers. He thought that men could learn to fly—'

Latham threw back his head and shouted with laughter. The sound came brutally, cutting through the shadows.

Young stopped talking abruptly and his face grew drawn and foolish. Gradually the eddied images which the words had caused resolved gradually, centred once again on the still head on the table, becoming no more than sound without memory.

'The King of England's daughter!' said Latham. 'Flying machines!' As he uttered them, the words lost contact with reality, becoming more than a little braggart and the property of fools. 'That's as may be,' said Latham shortly. He was still shaking with late laughter. 'Where found you him?' he asked. 'After this battle, which he did not win—I, being older than you, my master, remember something of that—and he was found, and cered, being brought south, what

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

then? I care nothing for things that are past. But of this thing that lies here before us I take much heed.' He gestured towards the head on the table. In spite of his words, it had almost ceased to interest him. Now that the cause and origin of Young's disease had been found, there remained only one course of action. He turned it over in his mind while Young spoke, only half-hearing him.

'WE found the lead coffin at Sheen above ground,' said Young. 'It is a disgraceful thing that he should never have had Christian burial.' The glazier's hand passed caressingly, lightly, over the linen that covered the face. 'He was a brave enemy. They should have honoured him.'

'What does it matter, when a man's dead as mutton?' said Latham impatiently. 'Go on.'

'Well . . . we found him. He had died ex-communicate. That was why, when it happened, King Harry had the excuse for no funeral. They say he had always hated the King of Scots, done his best to ruin him at home and abroad, despite the fact that his sister was married to him. They say the Pope of that day issued a plenary indulgence to all who would fight against France and Scotland. And though later the Pope sent his permission for the burial, still nothing was done. King Harry by that time had stopped caring for the Pope.'

'Have a care how you speak of Popes,' murmured Latham.

Young did not hear him. His mind had cast back again to Sheen, that summer abode of the early Tudor kings; to Her Grace's father and grandfather, who had called it Richmond, but somehow the old name had remained. In the late young King's reign, in little King Ned's, the old palace had been dismantled. No one lived there now. Only lately Her Grace had wanted the escutcheons from the glass. Very fine they were, red and green and yellow glass, with metal inset. You didn't find that sort of work now. But that was why he had been sent to Sheen. There had been one attic-room thick with limber—wheels, table-legs, old leads and lathes of wood, everything silvered over with dust and cobwebs spun from one to the other over God knew how many years. 'The coffin was there,' he said aloud, 'the lead coffin, and they opened it.'

'Who opened it?' asked Latham. 'Your men?'

'They were drunk,' said Young wearily. 'We'd found butts of Her Grace's claret, canary, and malmsey in a cellar. How was I to know it would lead to harm?'

'You joined them, I don't doubt,' Latham, who had never been in favour of drinking with his own workmen, allowed patronage to creep into his tone.

'I joined them,' said Young, and suddenly laid his head on his arms. 'But the next part, the cutting off of the head, was none of me.'

'They cut off the head?' cried Latham, scandalised.

Young had begun to sob quietly. 'Would God I'd known,' he said. 'What could I do? They'd said, some of them, that this king was a traitor. His name was on the coffin, with his emblem, which was a unicorn. There was no end, they said, but one for traitors, and that was to have the head struck—' He shuddered. 'I saw it not, as God sees me.'

'You'd gone back to the malmsey,' said Latham dryly. It struck him as a sordid enough tale. 'What became of the body?' he asked presently.

Young spoke through shuttered fingers, arms leaning on the polished wood. 'I took the head,' he said. 'I wrapped it in linen, and brought it away. It did not seem a right thing to leave it to their sport. And when I returned again, the body had gone. God knows where it is now. There is nothing left there but rubble. If I'd left this—'

'Well, the more fool you that you didn't, for you have left yourself that much to get rid of,' snapped Latham. 'Why, man, how can you keep a head about you daily, mooning over it like a love-sick girl? What's past is past, and now—'

Lancelot Young had drawn the head towards him again, unwrapping the linen from the face and looking down. 'A girl might have loved him,' he murmured, 'as I'll swear they did, and others beside the King's daughter.'

Latham rose to his feet. 'Cover it,' he said sharply, 'or if you will not, then I'm for the road, and you for the Bishopsgate Without, if I mistake not, do you go far in this gait.' He stared for a moment at Young's bent head. 'I'll speak to the sexton of Michael's,' he said presently. 'He shall have Christian burial, as you're so desirous of it.'

There was no answer. It was doubtful if Young had heard.

BUT WITH NO OUTWARD MONUMENT

The chandler cleared his throat. 'There'll be questions asked, I don't doubt,' he said. 'It's a favour I'm doing you.'

Young raised dull eyes and stared at the chandler.

Suddenly the chandler laughed. 'Who's to believe this tale of yours?' he said. 'Where's your proof, in all of this world, that this—this—was ever a king?'

'None,' said Young. He was looking again at the head.

Latham shook himself free of the feeling he had that there were three of them in the room. 'I'll go there now,' he said. 'Shall I? He will not be yet abed.'

Young nodded, as though for the sake of quietness. He might have heard nothing that had been said.

WHEN Latham had gone, Young returned again to the room, sat down at the table and took the head between his hands. 'So it is with us,' he said briefly. 'Do you hear me?' His fingers, with a curious familiar touch, ran through the long, straight hair. 'When they brought you from among the tangled limbs of the dead, when dawn broke, was it for this? Would you have it otherwise, if you could speak? Or do you care no longer?' He looked up suddenly, hearing the sound of his voice in the empty room. 'Perhaps it is as Latham says,' he thought, 'and in this way a man runs mad.'

He rose, and leaving the head on the table went to the window and looked down at the street, deserted now and lit by a rising moon. He tried not to think of that other moon, rising after heavy storm over a sodden Northumbrian field, or of the lines that an old poet had written.

*Gaping against the moon
Their ghosts went away!*

'And so it ends,' thought Young. He was afflicted by a sense of poignant loss, striking the more deeply because it could claim no link with anything he had ever known. 'Perhaps when he is gone,' he said to himself, 'I will feel it no longer.' He remained by the window for a while, staring out into the night.

The next day Latham came again, with the arrangements that he had made.

THE dawn crept greyly up into Wood Street, outlining the two figures of the men who stood there. There was no one else about at that hour. Far down the street a lamp burned dimly, its colour pale against the growing day, but everywhere else, among the sleeping houses, it was dark. The two men waited, saying nothing. Presently a sound was heard in the distance. It was the creaking of a cart.

'They are coming now,' said the larger man.

Lancelot Young shivered, and drew his cloak about him. The collar was turned up steeply, so that he would not be known. At the end of the street the cart's shape came in sight. The man who was pushing it strained hard, with bowed shoulders. He gave no sign of having seen them.

'Give it to me now,' said Latham, as the cart came nearer.

Young shuddered. 'Was it needful, this way?' he said. The other avoided his beseeching eyes.

'I tell you if he passes, and we achieve it not, the onus is not on me. Who's to ask questions about what's found *there*? We'll be caught if you fool longer. Give it to me, I say.'

Young had a bundle in his arm. When it was taken from him, he turned his head away. 'I do not want to see,' he muttered.

The sound of the cart grew louder. The wheels creaked slightly from lack of oil. The heaviness of the burden made the man's pace slow. The cart strained past at the level of their eyes. Lying there, in a jumble of limbs and bones, were the poor lately dead from the Monkswell almshouses. Latham stepped forward, and flung the head on the cart. 'You said he was much among common men,' he said, returning. The glazier still had his head turned away. 'Come,' said Latham taking him firmly by the arm.

Lancelot Young went with him. He was shaking still, and pale, like a man with ague. Latham's voice began, kindly and mercilessly, to talk of other things. In the distance, the sounds rumbled for a little longer, grew fainter, and then ceased.



The Trap-Line and the Wolf

R. N. STEWART

WHILST at Fort Yukon, an Indian friend, one Isaiah, asked me if I would like to come round his trap-line. The land was fast-locked in the grip of winter. The thermometer had registered 72 degrees F. of frost for some days, colloquially spoken of as '40 below.'

A trap-line covers a wide stretch of country and may be twenty, thirty, or even forty miles in length. No particular species of furbearer is sought or tried for; any victim is acceptable.

Trap-lines are very jealously guarded rights and, though there are no owners in the strict sense, a trap-line, once established, is as carefully preserved as if the trapper were indeed the owner, not only of the traps, but also of the land itself. No poaching would be tolerated and no theft of the catch excused. Nor would it ever occur to any of the normal inhabitants to break this unwritten law.

The value of a good line represents no mean sum in dollars at the end of the trapping season. The main species caught in the Fort Yukon region are silver, cross-bred, and red foxes, the very valuable marten, and mink, ermine, lynx, wolverine, bear, and occasionally wolves. Other furs, such as musquash (known as 'rats') and beaver, are not trapped but shot when in season. Besides the main

furbearers, snowshoe rabbits are caught for bait. Unwanted moose flesh and dried fish are also used for this purpose.

There are several grades of trap, as it is obvious that a trap to catch a mink would not hold a bear. For the most part the traps are gin traps, double sprung for the larger species, single for the smaller. Snowshoe rabbits are snared, and the moose are shot.

I had always supposed that a trap-line entailed a degree of cruelty that left little to excuse it, but after having seen one in operation some of my misconceptions were removed. Yet, even so, there is a large element of cruelty about the trap-line for some species. The snowshoe rabbits are snared by means of a springy sapling tied down, and any rabbit caught is jerked up four feet in the air and killed at once. With such a device there is no cruelty. The smaller animals, such as mink and ermine, die very quickly, thanks not to the trap but to the cold. Dying of cold is not a painful death and does not take long. Indeed, the victim merely becomes sleepier and sleepier till coma intervenes. Even the jaws of the trap cause little pain, due to the anæsthetising effect of the low temperature. Nevertheless with lynx, bears, and wolves there is no doubt that great cruelty must be inflicted.

THE TRAP-LINE AND THE WOLF

WE started out from Fort Yukon with a sled and a team of dogs. The sled was not heavily loaded, because Isaiah hoped to fill it with the pelts.

Our first job was to go round the rabbit-snares to collect bait. This took some hours, first to reach the line, then to collect the harvest. We gathered four dozen and shot a few more.

Then we went on to the line itself. In a line as long as thirty-odd miles, it struck me that Isaiah must have a remarkable memory to know just where each trap was set; though they were widely spaced, they must have averaged eight to ten to the mile. But he did not seem to miss any and assured me that he knew exactly where each one was.

The country was flat and sparsely timbered with jack-pine and birch-trees. The foreground scene was made beautiful by the heavy hoar-frost on the trees, and by the snow and the ice. The distant view was dark and menacing, veiled by lack of daylight and unrelieved by heights. The trail was easy, because the snow was nowhere deep, and much of the route was over the surface-ice of hundreds of small lakes. We made good time and by six in the evening we reached a camp site. During the day we had collected four mink, two marten, and a few ermine. Next evening we camped at a hut at the outer end of the line.

On the third day we found a two-thirds-grown dog-wolf in one of the traps. Isaiah was delighted. This, he said, was a great triumph. I asked him what he proposed to do with the wolf, and he told me that he would take it home alive and use it as a sire for half-bred dogs. And he did not forget to remind me also that wolves robbed the traps and that one less left fewer thieves.

The husky dog is a wonderful animal, but it is apt to suffer from lack of new blood. The very best dogs are those in which there is a quarter strain of wolf-offspring, that is, of the second generation after a pure wolf parent. It is better to have the male parent as the wolf, because a pure-bred bitch-wolf very seldom becomes tame, whereas it does not matter if the dog is savage. The husky bitches are put into the artificial den when in season. A young wolf is desirable, because old ones very seldom accept captivity and, even if they survive it, they often do not mate. Sometimes they kill the bitches. But, and this was why Isaiah was so pleased, a

half- or three-quarters-grown wolf can be tamed sufficiently to serve the purpose. Never, however, do they live long. They may serve the intention of their captors and father a few litters, but a year or less is the probable expectation of life.

THE wolf Isaiah had captured was in a bad way. How long he had been in the trap I do not know. One leg was severely lacerated and the beast was near the end of his strength. All the same, the wild light in his yellow eyes spoke clearly of the danger of a careless approach.

The dogs had been halted some two hundred yards away. It would have been courting disaster to have allowed them near enough to fight the wolf while it was still in the trap or to join in when it was being secured after release.

I must frankly confess that my own inclination was to shoot the wolf. I thought that the kindest thing to do, in view of its injury and knowing the sort of life it would be condemned to live if we were successful in taking it back alive. However, I had to help Isaiah, seeing that the wolf meant so much to him and that its sacrifice would benefit several generations of huskies and their owners.

We took from the sled two wolf-ropes, a spare parka, and some lengths of stout babiche—strips of tanned caribou skin, and went up to the trapped beast. The ensuing struggle was unpleasant, but, owing to the exhaustion of the wolf, it took a shorter time than I had expected. The animal's mouth was tied, as were the hind-legs, and we put a dressing on the wounded leg. Then we wrapped the creature up in one of the wolf-ropes and placed it on the sled.

There was no use in trying to feed it at this time. Not only would it have refused sustenance, but we should also have lost time. Actually, our action was the best for the wolf, because warmth was what was most required, and the robe provided this. We finished the trap-line and came home.

THE wolf was shut up in a dark cabin and the door securely fastened, not only in case of escape, but also to prevent stray huskies from entering. Had they entered, they would either have killed the wolf, in its weakened state, or have themselves been

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

killed. The wolf's jaws and legs were released, and some raw meat and a bowl of watered milk were put in with it.

Never shall I forget the look in the eyes of that young creature—a mixture of misery and defiance, and yet full of a desperate courage, faced by what it considered implacable enemies, and ready to fight to the death. Once again I was sorely tempted to end the affair.

The beast was too weak that day to apply his remedial tongue to his wounded leg. Isaiah said that we should leave the dressing alone, as meanwhile it gave protection and, when he was stronger, the wolf would deal with it himself. For his weakness the cabin provided sufficient shelter and the natural resistance of the animal would do the rest.

Next day we went in to see him. Some of the meat had been eaten. This was a good sign and meant that the will to live was still dominant in him. The milk was frozen, so we took it out, thawed it, and put it back. It was impossible to hand-feed him or to re-dress the leg. Such nursing would only have meant that we would have been severely bitten or

have to tie the wolf's mouth again, and Isaiah thought that the animal was now able to nurse himself. In this Isaiah was right, because the leg did heal, though ever afterwards the wolf walked with a limp.

I did not stay long enough at Fort Yukon to hear of the success or failure of the breeding, but before I left the wolf was quite strong again. All the times I saw him he never came out of the cabin, even though a small area of open run was built for him so that he might do so and yet not escape. His incarceration seemed so much worse than that of any of our zoological specimens, which appear to accept their captivity in some measure of patient resignation. He never lost his attitude of bitter hatred for his captors, even when accepting their hospitality in the shape of food. I often wondered if other men saw in his eyes the message of loathing he felt, or the desperate longing for freedom that seemed so plainly expressed to me. Perhaps it is as well that they did not see it. To this day I cannot but feel that it would have been better for him if Isaiah and I had left that trap-line visit until a day or two later.

Country Club

*A fat man sits beside me drinking gin.
His face is round and shining like a moon.
His wife is playing bridge, so he just sits.
The string quartet is tuning up and soon*

*The lilt of music will be in the air
And that old woman holding all the cards
Will shout a little louder. Diamonds shine
From ears and wrists and bosoms, yards and yards*

*Of heavy velvet hangings drape the doors,
The windows are tight shut, the fiddler sweats,
The fat man orders yet another gin—
His wife said: 'Only two!' but he forgets.*

*Outside there is a threadlike crescent moon
Above the roof that glistens in the snow,
It is so still you almost hear your heart,
But this I'm sure the fat man does not know.*

*If suddenly the violinist said:
'Let's leave all this, go out and count the stars!'
He'd call the Secretary quick and have
The foolish fiddler put behind the bars.*

NANSI PUGH.



National Foods and National Prejudices

CYRIL BENNS

CLIMATE has much to do with the type of food eaten by a particular people. Inhabitants of high altitudes require an immense amount of animal food, for instance. Vegetable foods are both unsuitable and unobtainable, especially in regions which are icebound for the greater part of the year. This explains why the Eskimo eats an average of twenty pounds of flesh each day.

The Greenlanders live almost exclusively on animal substances, although on rare occasions they find a change in dining on a certain kind of seaweed. The Laplanders live principally on dried fish and the flesh of the reindeer and the bear. Their bread is made of the powdered bones of fishes, mixed with the tender bark of the pine or birch tree. Their normal drink is whale-oil or water infused with juniper berries.

The Tartars enjoy the flesh of horses, wild asses, and other animals, either raw or with only a slight degree of preparation. This preparation seems to be a putrefaction which takes place while the meat is carried under the saddles of this wandering people. Their common drink is mare's milk, fermented with the flour of millet. The Persians, too, enjoy the flesh of the ass, and it is claimed that its flavour compares with that of the stag.

The Sandwich Islanders favour a dozen raw mackerel for breakfast, while the Arabs are very partial to a sheep's kidney or liver, uncooked, and seasoned only with a liberal sprinkling of salt. The aborigines of Australia vary a flesh diet of kangaroo, opossum, bandicoot, and rat with wild honey and a large variety of insects. They probe into the bark of trees with a hatchet and extract grubs and insects, which they cram into their mouths and devour while still alive. The inhabitants of the Ladrone Islands offer a considerable contrast. They live solely on roots, fruits, and fish, a diet which seems to have much in its favour, for the Ladrone Islanders are invariably healthy and live to an extreme old age.

CUSTOM and prejudice, however, seem to have much more to do with diet than does climate. What we accept and what we reject in the way of food seems to be almost wholly a matter of use and habit. The Turks, for instance, who are by no means squeamish in their diet, will not eat oysters. Nor would the European find rats as appealing as the Chinese seem to do. To these Orientals rats

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

are so highly esteemed that they sell at something like two shillings a dozen. Not only do the hindquarters of the dog make a strong appeal, but they are even valued more highly than a leg of mutton and they fetch a higher price. Nor would the European appreciate the bird's nests which, in China, command double their weight in silver. The nests consist of a kind of gelatine secreted by the sea-swallow of the Malay Peninsula, from which the Chinaman makes a most excellent soup. Indeed, the soup he prepares from the sea-slug of Australia is not regarded as being superior to the bird's-nest soup. Another Chinese dish which finds no favour with the Westerner is the chrysalis of the silkworm. The Chinese, always models of thrift, after winding the silk from the cocoon, make a meal of the chrysalis.

The West Indian negroes, who refuse to touch a succulent dish of rabbit-stew, will enjoy enormously a dish of palm-worms fried in fat, and even a snake is thought a great treat. The natives of the Antilles have an unexpected taste in eggs. The egg of the chicken is ignored, while the egg of the alligator and the lizard is eaten with much relish. In Brazil, ants served with a resinous sauce is a favourite dish. In Siam, ants are eaten curried, and the Cingalese eat the bee as well as the honey it produces.

Britain is one of the few countries where the frog has failed to find its place on the bill of fare, and there was a time when the Briton regarded the 'frog-eating Frenchman' with considerable contempt. France, however, is not the only country in which frogs are counted a delicacy. In both America and Canada, as well as in many countries on the Continent, frogs are eaten with great enjoyment. According to an American consular report, frogs to the value of £40,000 were sold in Montreal at an average price of 1s. 8d. a pound. One hotel in Toronto claims to sell about 1500 lb. of frogs' legs every year. The flesh is said to be exceedingly tender, with a flavour very like that of the chicken.

THE staple food of the modern Greeks consists of bread, which is dark in colour and coarse in texture, as well as grapes and black olives. Their great passion, however, is olive-oil, with which they saturate all their dishes. A common repast of the Greek peasant is a hunk of bread, cut into a criss-

cross pattern, seasoned with pepper and salt and drenched in oil. Eggs, too, are a great favourite, as are also onions and cabbages. Honey finds a large place in their diet, being used in some of their savoury dishes and in most of their sweet preparations. Meat, on the other hand, is of little consequence to the Greeks.

The popular idea that the Russian peasant lives almost exclusively on rye-bread, pickled cucumbers, caviare, and train-oil is hardly borne out by some of the national dishes of Russia served in the hotels of London, Paris, and New York. A good Russian dinner is preceded by a variety of snacks, which may include fresh caviare, raw herrings, smoked salmon, sun-dried sturgeon, raw smoked goose, radishes, cheese, sliced sausages, cod roes, raw ham, bread and butter. With these are offered vodka or corn brandy and tiny glasses of kümmel, kirschwasser, maraschino, or anisette. Sometimes a cold soup is served, made of half-fermented rye- or barley-beer, with pieces of herring, cucumber, meat, and ice floating in it. The Russians are fond of smoked fish, cut into slices and served with a mustard-sauce, olive-oil, and vinegar.

They also have a passion for cold-boiled suckling pig. The animal is boiled in white wine, boned after it has cooled, and then encrusted in a mould of powdered ice and aspic jelly and served with poached white of egg, gherkins, beetroot, and other garnishings. Kvass, a Russian rye-beer, is made by simultaneous acid and alcoholic fermentation of wheat, rye, barley, and buckwheat—or of rye-bread, with the addition of sugar and fruit. A universal drink in Russia since the 16th century, it is made in large towns commercially, but elsewhere frequently an article of domestic production. Kvass, is of a very low alcoholic content. Besides the ordinary kind, there are superior forms of the drink, such as apple or raspberry kvass.

The Italians can proudly claim to have originated macaroni. It first attracted the notice of English travellers in the 18th century, and the young bloods of that day borrowed its name for their most fashionable club. This set of travelled fops, as vicious as they were exclusive, called themselves the Macaronis and introduced the dish at Almack's subscription table.

The word macaroni is held to be probably from the dialectal Italian *maccare*, to crush, but the more fanciful derivation is worth

NATIONAL FOODS AND NATIONAL PREJUDICES

recording. According to this, it was the cook of a wealthy Palermitan noble who first devised the dish. Having filled a large china bowl with the farinaceous tubes and the succulent rich white sauce and grated parmesan, he set his new concoction before his lord. The nobleman, a gourmet of the first water, tasted it and exclaimed: 'Cari!' (excellent). After the second mouthful, he cried: 'Ma cari!' (excellent indeed). Presently, as the flavour grew upon him, his enthusiasm increased, and in a voice tremulous with emotion, he shouted: 'Ma caroni! Ma caroni!' (Indeed, most supremely, sublimely, and superlatively excellent).

The Italians attained an excellence in cookery long before any of their neighbours. The supremacy of modern French cooking owes its foundations to the Italians, whose methods were introduced to the French Court by the princesses of the Medici family.

NO other people love meat as ardently as the English, and no people know so little of the art of cooking vegetables, pulse, and roots. The English housewife, all too often quite devoid of culinary inventiveness, could always rely on a plain joint, or chops, or steaks to cook themselves more or less. Now, because of the meat scarcity, the English housewife's ignorance of the art of cooking is making itself felt. She excels with the steak, the pork chop, the pressed-beef, but, when these things are not available, then, alas, the diet becomes depressingly monotonous. Even in times of plenty, however, the Englishman has shown but little interest in the art of cooking. The people seem to prefer to live very plainly, as though fearful of making a god of their stomachs, and roast is relieved only by the boiled and the fried.

The Welsh, it appears, agree with the proverb: 'Toasted cheese hath no master.' Welsh rarebit still makes its embracing national appeal, and when a Welshman boasted that his father once had twelve cooks to provide for twelve guests he was met with the rejoinder: 'Ah, I suppose every man toasted his own cheese.'

A spurious ballad purports to reveal that

Welsh rarebit is the national delicacy of the wild Welsh:

*Jenny ap-Rise, hur could eat nothing nice.
A dainty Welsh Rabbit?—Go toast her a slice
Of cheese, if you please, which better agrees
With the tooth of poor Taffy than physic and fees.*

*A pound Jenny got, and brought to his cot
A prime double Gloster, all hot, piping hot,
Which, being a bunny without any bones,
Was custard with mustard to Taffy ap-Jones.*

Shakespeare makes a number of allusions to the Welshman's love of cheese, one of the most pointed occurring in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: 'I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese . . . than my wife with herself.'

The Scotsman's love of oats can be traced to the stern climate of the country which has favoured the oat above all other cereals. The Scots have naturally acquired a national fondness for their oatmeal porridge and their thin, flat, round or triangular girdle-baked oatcakes.

The preparation of a singed sheep's head is a work of art, requiring the blacksmith and the chef in order to bring it to perfection. But, of course, the haggis holds the first place in Scotland. The heart, lungs, liver, etc., of a sheep or a calf are minced together with suet, onions, and toasted oatmeal, seasoned, and boiled in the stomach of the animal. Badly prepared, the haggis is nauseating; but properly made, it is excellent, immortalised by Burns himself:

*Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin' race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm!
Weel are ye wordy o' a grace
As lang's my arm.*

* * * * *

*Ye Powers wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies!
But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer,
Gie her a Haggis!*



The Guard of Honour

C. T. YELLAND

WOMEN love planning ahead. Men hate it. Consequently General Sir Brian Melcombe was not at all pleased when his wife reminded him that within two months' time they would be occupying much smaller quarters. 'We shan't have a place this size when we retire. Moreover, we can't put off everything to the last day and then calmly walk out and leave the lot to the removal men.'

'I don't see why not,' he replied. 'We always have.'

'You mean *you* always have,' Lady Melcombe returned. 'It's been my planning that's got everything ready beforehand.' So saying, she crossed the room and, lifting some of the cardboard boxes that were on the side-table, placed them beside her husband, who was taking his ease on the settee. 'I thought we'd go through these photographs this evening and throw out those we don't want. You've collected scores of regimental groups in your time and you can't want them all. So pick out those you do want and put the others in this carton.'

The general looked at the pile of boxes beside him. 'D'you mean to say they're all full of photos?' he asked.

Lady Melcombe nodded.

'Good lor,' he groaned. Putting his pipe aside, he opened the nearest box. 'Are these boxes in any order?' he asked.

'More or less,' his wife answered. 'I've got them sorted out into years, as you can see if you look on the lids.'

'No date on this one,' he announced.

'Isn't there?' she said, 'Oh. Then those are the ones you had before we were married. You can't expect me to date them. I don't know half the people or when they were taken.'

Reluctantly and without enthusiasm the general poked his finger into the fading relics of the past. As he did so, a group of sergeants in the 1914 full-dress uniform of the Royal Bandoliers caught Lady Melcombe's eye. 'There, that's the kind of thing I mean. There's a lot like that we don't really need. What's more, we shan't have room for them. Now what about that one? Does it mean anything special to you? If not, then scrap it.'

As the general studied the photo, his mind went back over the years. Then he recognised the bemedalled N.C.O. on the extreme left. 'Good lor', it's old Curly Mann, the biggest scallywag the old Second Battalion ever had. Why,' and his chuckle developed into a

THE GUARD OF HONOUR

reminiscent laugh, 'this was the Guard of Honour at old Red Hot's wedding. . . .'

GENERAL MELCOMBE'S thoughts went back to 1920, the year when the Army, after having swollen into millions, was, like a woman after childbirth, rapidly regaining its former figure. Those were the days when brigadiers were reverting to colonels and men who had commanded battalions thought themselves lucky to be back as captains and in charge of companies; the days when he was Adjutant and Colonel Poker ('Red Hot' to the troops) had the Second Battalion.

Now the Easter of that year was especially important to Poker. His wife had been killed in a motor-crash while he was on the Somme and this Saturday he was to remarry. Accordingly the week before Easter was a very busy one for him and he was not in the best of moods on the Wednesday when men came up before him for judgment in Battalion Orders. Among the delinquents was Private Mann, M.M., charged with drunkenness.

Poker's moustache bristled when Curly, as he was known to all, appeared before him. Curly had been in his company as a recruit and there was little about him that the Colonel did not know. A first-class man in the line, and a damned nuisance out of it. You had to promote him when N.C.O. casualties occurred—he was worth a section on his own—but once the battalion was out on rest he was guilty of some misdemeanour which forfeited the stripes. As his conduct-sheet showed, he had gone from private to sergeant and sergeant to private, not once, but often, as if promotion were a game of snakes and ladders.

'Aren't you ever going to grow up?' Poker angrily demanded. 'I know you're a first-class fighter, but it's time you learnt a good soldier is something more than just a good scrapper. You're a damned disgrace. I should have thought you at least would have had enough pride in the regiment not to let the battalion down like this. Here we are, back at the depot, and you're found drunk in Church Street.'

'Chapel Street, sir,' Curly protested.

Poker nearly exploded, then ejaculated with an icy calm that was so obviously assumed: 'Really? Are you putting that forward as grounds for extenuating circumstances or are you trying to involve me in a religious argument?' Then the calm vanished and Red Hot

released his anger. 'What the blazes do you mean by telling me it was Chapel Street? The behaviour of the Bandoliers has got to be as good in any back street as I'd expect it to be outside Buckingham Palace, or I'll know the reason why. I'm sick and tired of seeing you up before me. Fourteen days C.B.'

Later, when they were crossing the barrack-square, Melcombe had remarked: 'I'm afraid, sir, that Mann is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.'

'Yes,' Poker grunted, 'but the Scriptures spell man with only one n. Here we are with only five left of the old battalion that went to France in 'fourteen and he has to be one of them. Talk about the devil looking after his own.'

POKER'S first wedding had been a khaki one, but he had planned to wear full-dress when he remarried. Now, apart from those uniforms worn by Scottish regiments, which have a glory of their own, the full-dress of the Bandoliers was unique among the infantry. Whereas most regiments wore the spiked helmet, the Bandoliers, like Foot Guards, wore bearskins. Instead of the customary red, the tunic cloth was green, while the sash worn by officers and sergeants was Garter blue. Incidentally, they were the only infantry whose sergeants wore swords, so that when a corporal was promoted the regiment did not speak of having a third stripe but of 'getting his sword.'

Fate alone knew what had happened to most of the full-dress stored in 1914, but shortly before Poker's intended marriage a number of sergeants' uniforms had been found in some cupboards in an obscure corner of the former married-quarters. Pleased with the idea of having a Guard of Honour in full-dress, Melcombe had been instructed to select the necessary N.C.O.s. Examination of the uniforms left him with the impression that the pre-war batch of sergeants must have been Guards' material, for of all the sergeants in the battalion he could only find six whose physique would fill out the cloth and do justice to its glory. The six chosen were duly instructed in their duties and Poker himself attended a full-dress rehearsal.

ELEVEN o'clock on the Saturday morning had been fixed for the time of the

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

wedding. At a quarter-past ten Regimental Sergeant-Major Lubbock's peace of mind was shattered by the news that Sergeant Malton, of the Guard of Honour, had fallen downstairs and broken his leg. Lubbock had never heard or read that messengers who brought bad news were themselves slaughtered but he could cheerfully have slain the orderly who reported that mishap.

A substitute had to be found, and found damn quickly. Someone who could not only fill out that pre-war uniform but also knew how to wear it. Knowing the battalion as he did, Lubbock was left with the panic-making discovery that the only possible person was Curly Mann, the scallywag, now doing his fourteen days C.B.!

Lubbock looked at his watch. Twenty-five past ten. Hastily he rattled off orders. Bugles blew. Minions ran hither and thither. Curly Mann, yanked from scrubbing the canteen floor, found himself hastily shaved by the regimental barber, hurled into full-dress uniform, with his own row of medals fastened to his chest, and threatened with all the pangs of hell if he did not put up a good performance. Remembering his own wedding, the R.S.M. felt that 'the old man' would be far too preoccupied with his own thoughts to pay much attention to the individual features of the Guard of Honour. After all, he reflected, beneath a bearskin most clean-shaven faces look very much alike. Lubbock should have known Poker better than this, but his mind was so occupied in getting his sixth man that his judgment suffered.

Solemnly and somewhat red of face, a coloration due more to the stiffness and thickness of the unaccustomed upright collars than to the seriousness of the occasion, the Guard of Honour spread themselves along the seat just inside the door of the Garrison Church. The bridegroom, already in his place, glanced around at the sound of the heavy service-boots upon the tiled floor. When he spotted the face of the man nearest the aisle his mouth opened as if someone had stabbed him in the back and his monocle dropped from his eye.

Curly Mann pretended not to see the spasm and bending forward hid his face behind his hand as if engaged in reverent prayer. He remained in this attitude until he felt he could no longer do so, then, sitting erect, with stiffened back, kept his eyes

stolidly fixed on the altar. A few seconds later the bride appeared. From time to time during the service Poker's close-cropped head would turn and lambent flashes of astounded bewilderment were flung at Curly.

The ceremony over, bride and groom slowly came down the aisle towards the vestry, and the dumbfounded glance that Poker swept from the three stripes on Curly's arm to that old soldier's face would have shrivelled lesser men.

As the wedding party passed into the vestry the Guard of Honour slipped into position outside.

At the end of the arch of swords the married couple paused for photographs. Now, apart from a number of civilian guests and on-lookers, there were gathered many of the Bandoliers, and among them the delighted pals of Curly Mann, who found it difficult to control their exuberance and whose remarks about a certain sergeant in the Guard of Honour made the R.S.M. itch to strangle the speakers with their own tongues. Lubbock, however, had managed to get a stage-whisper into the Colonel's ear while the bride was shaking hands with the Chaplain. 'Everything's all right, sir. Explain about Mann later.'

Before the newly-weds drove off in their car the bride thanked the Guard of Honour and smilingly asked her husband to introduce them.

Poker turned to Lubbock. 'Oh, Lubbock, will you do the honours?'

'Certainly, sir.—Sergeant Brown, Sergeant Irons, Sergeant Fosket, Sergeant Harvey, Sergeant Nicholls, and . . . er . . . Acting-Sergeant Mann.'

'Acting-Sergeant?', the bride said, smiling. 'What's the difference?'

'Oh, rank not yet officially confirmed, my dear,' Poker broke in hastily.

The bride, lovely and charming, smiled up into Curly's face. 'Not yet confirmed? Oh, but I'm sure it will be. You look so efficient,' she said.

The five bearskins of the other sergeants quivered like the hot air shimmering above a coke fire, but their wearers, being Bandoliers, held firmly to their smiles.

'WELL, dear, do you want that group or not?'

Lady Melcombe's query tore her husband

LIFE IN AFRICA'S NEWEST EL DORADO

across a gap of thirty years and dropped him into the present. The general shook himself. 'Yes. I'm not getting rid of that one.'

'Then put it in this box. But for goodness' sake don't take so long over the others or we shall never get through them.'

Life in Africa's Newest El Dorado

HOWARD FAIRFIELD

SIX years ago, with a haze of dust from the Kalahari Desert hanging like a pall above the shimmering ground of the table-flat plains around Odendaalsrus, almost in the centre of South Africa's Orange Free State, an engineer named William Hewitson struck gold. A world busy with other matters took surprisingly little notice of the news. Among the miners of South Africa, however, it repeated an ancient story—the story of California, of Australia's Lasseter's Reef, of the Klondike.

The fabulously rich earth of South Africa had once again yielded a hint of enormous treasure. Hewitson, one of the most expert mining-engineers in the employment of the Sir Ernest Oppenheimer interests, bored for three-quarters of a mile into the veld to make his find. The four-foot core of rock brought up by his drill weighed about 3½ lb. It contained gold worth roughly fifteen shillings. Probably something like £5000 had been spent in obtaining it. To people accustomed to stories of gold-nuggets the size of one's fist gleaming in a tumbling stream, the reward may seem a poor one. The inhabitants of Johannesburg, now a large industrial and commercial city with a multitude of interests other than gold, but a city where every man, woman, and child is still susceptible to the heady fever of gold, knew better.

That fifteen shillings' worth of gold touched off one of the most amazing rushes in history. With expert scientific information to replace wild rumour, the story was still thrilling. Estimates were given that the area contained

about £3,000,000,000 worth of gold—and uranium. The dreams of hundreds of people were turned into real ambitions when Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, never a wild optimist, stated: 'The area is likely to become the scene of the most extensive mining development the world has ever known.'

As a technical journalist in Johannesburg I was able to take part in this rush and yet remain aloof from it. Our library files, going back to the days of Rhodes, had told me too well the tragedies that gold brought for me to succumb to the temptation. I was in a minority. The people of Johannesburg and district, with this new El Dorado a mere 150 miles away, burned their boats with a vengeance. Couples living in retirement, with their incomes secure in Government stock, sold out and bought shares in anything which was concerned with projects in Odendaalsrus. Men back from the army threw up the jobs that had been kept for them, sold their homes, and invested their gratuities. Immigrants from Britain were amazed at the long lists of businesses for sale. The grocer had become a canteen owner at the gold-mining engineers' compound; the garage man was running boring machinery; the radio-dealer wrestled with electric-power plant. In a score of ways they managed to get near the scene of the new gold-strike.

IT was a dreary scene, almost flat, virtually treeless. The Boer farms for years had fought a losing battle against drought and

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

poor soil. On my way to Odendaalsrus with the vanguard of the hordes of miners, adventurers, and plain crooks I passed the poor little farmsteads, the Boer owners sitting stolidly on their stoeps. Dour and shabby, they showed no excitement that their hitherto unsaleable farms had brought them fortunes, with a lifetime's income being added in each successive bid by the financiers' representatives sent by speculators who gave the simple order: 'Buy.'

I stayed one night on a farm standing on a gentle slope from which the whole area could be seen. The post-van brought a bundle of letters for the owner. They came from Europe, Britain, America, and scores of addresses in South Africa itself. The writers begged, cajoled, and, in some cases, even threatened in their frenzied attempts to buy a plot of land on the farm. Others simply requested a gift of money from a farmer whom they knew to be rich.

Three times during the night there was a knock on the door. Courteously the old farmer invited the callers in, while his wife bustled around to make coffee. The request was always the same: 'We want to buy a share in your land.' Politely, they were refused. The farm had already been sold—for £130,000. A year earlier it would have been unmarketable. Though utter ruin has already come to many of these gold-frenzied people, it has been entirely their own fault. Careful investors have made fortunes, and will continue to be rich for the rest of their lives.

WHEN I last visited Odendaalsrus towards the end of 1951 the veld was honey-combed with nearly five hundred boreholes. The extent of the field has been accurately surveyed. It measures about 300 square miles in a 10-mile-wide curving belt. Twenty-five shafts have been completed and thirteen separate mines are operating or about to operate. A rough estimate of the money already spent to get the mines going is £12,000,000.

A remarkable feature of the development work is that model towns are being erected. Two cities will eventually rise out of this semi-desert—Odendaalsrus and Welkom. Populations will be limited to 50,000 Europeans and 50,000 natives. To bring water to the towns for domestic and

industrial use from the Vaal river a water project costing something like £2,500,000 is in hand, the biggest of its kind south of the Equator.

Although the houses which have been built to cope with the sudden inrush of thousands of men with their families are no more ornate than a British prefab, they are ranged along fine wide roads and there is little of the mining shanty-town atmosphere of other rushes. Eventually these modest little homes will be replaced by houses on an approved design, making these modern gold-cities the best-planned on the Dark Continent.

But the real life of Africa's new El Dorado is that which goes on underground. Already seven miles of subterranean galleries exist, and ultimately the 300 square miles will be criss-crossed from end to end. The gold-bearing strata are twisted, so that in some places they are almost vertical. The gold-bearing 'blanket,' as it is called, looks like opaque glass, surrounded by greenish quartz. It may be a few inches thick, or several yards. It may be found in thin layers, separated by quartz. The richest strata of the area lie at 5000 feet, and, although this is not as deep as in the Johannesburg area, conditions are very hot. Ice-making plant to be installed will produce a cubic volume of ice equal to the amount of rock mined on some of the lowest levels.

To me, even the fortunes from gold hardly seem to justify the misery and toil of working in these conditions. The day when natives were driven almost like slaves, usually by one of their own race, and housed in mining kraals which were little better than prison compounds, has gone. Fine model villages are being built for them, and they have medical attention equal to that provided for Europeans.

Science has beaten much of the menace of gold-mining, but I found that the 'eight years of life' is still the universal belief of miners and engineers. This is the maximum period of useful activity which a human being can expect to have 5000 feet below the earth's surface. Those bitten with the gold-lust are quite cynical about it. They attempt to gauge to a nicety how long they can go on earning huge salaries without risking death. In this they ignore accidents through roof-falls, and invalidism. All they think about is the deadly dust. It is as fine as flour and floats in clouds at the slightest movement—and every grain

COMING, SAHIB !

of it is barbed. Silicosis is the inevitable result in time. Huge sums have been spent on research to combat the affliction. The air has been saturated with water vapour; even molasses has been sprayed to turn the powder into a sticky, harmless glue. Best results have been with special oils that cause the particles to precipitate. But the crash of rows of pneumatic-drills, the roar of dynamite explosions, and the cascade of thousands of tons of mined rock into the chutes prevent complete elimination of the menace. Rigorous medical checks with periodic X-rays tell when

the ominous black shadows in the lungs mean that mining must end.

Such is the lure of gold that men will go to any lengths to avoid the end of work. And, however modern conditions may be in the new gold-field, the traditional habit of the miner to spend all he earns has not disappeared. That is a frailty of human nature. The earth has its treasure and man has the ingenuity to wrest it forth. Odendaalsrus is worthy of the challenge. In every ton of ore from its deep-set strata are 168 ounces of gold. No mine in fabulous Africa is richer.

Coming, Sahib !

CYRIL DON

THE faithful Indian bearer who gives his lifetime, and even his life, to his adored master is no myth. But he is one of a race which has almost vanished owing to post-war conditions and the virtual elimination of the European from India. I speak mainly of Southern India. The distance between North and South India is as great, both in miles and in manners, as between Britain and Eastern Europe.

Generally one's domestic servants comprised a cheerful gang of crooks, who combined with the Southern curries to arouse one's liver to an almost incredible extent. The chief crook, or butler, was the person who invariably left a bachelor's service shortly after the latter married, and as soon as the bride had sufficiently overcome her inexperience to interfere with the normal practices of bachelors' butlers. These autocrats took it hard when a mere female told them that a daily issue of one pound of jam and two pounds of sugar was excessive for the requirements of one male European. My own new wife survived the incident of payment to my butler for some ramekin dishes that he had

'purchased in the bazaar,' only to discover subsequently that he had borrowed them from a neighbour's house, used them at our dinner party, and returned them the following day.

His very sudden departure from my service followed the occasion when he had been instructed to buy some buttons for my mess overalls. These were duly produced and paid for. Shortly afterwards, I made an unexpected trip from the plains to a hill-station, and my warm European clothes were unpacked, including all the buttonless trousers of my suits.

WITH the advent of a 'Madam,' a new era started. A superior, and more expensive, butler appeared on the scene and additional servants of all sorts became necessary. The cook could continue to cook the curry, but could not wash the dish. The cook's matey could wash the dish, but could not wash the floor. The sweeper alone could wash the floor, while Ayah washed madam's smalls, and master's shirts were sent to the

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

dhobi for the well-known rock-cracking process.

In time, one learnt the correct division of responsibilities and the fact that this was almost immutable. After some years of married life we had a spotless, smart, and well-educated youth as a sweeper. Unable to find a good house-boy at the time, my wife was anxious to transfer him to the post. Having learnt wisdom by then, she first went into conference with the particular crook who was then in charge of our team of servants and who happened to be a Christian. He was horrified. 'But, madam, he is of *sweeper* caste.' My wife was sweetly reasonable. 'You are a Christian?' 'Yes, madam, I am one Roman Catholic.' 'Then,' she pointed out, 'you know your Bible and how Jesus Christ would have nothing of caste, but sat down to meals with sweepers and badmashes.' The reply was simple, dignified, and final. 'Madam, I am one Indian servant. I am not Jesus Christ!'

IN Southern India English is the language used between the European and his domestic servant. The vocabulary is small and sometimes delightfully descriptive. One of our servants was asked, one evening, if it was raining. He stepped off the veranda for a moment and then returned to sum up the weather situation succinctly with the words: 'Leaking little bit.'

We were sitting in our compound one night when a sudden damp chill came upon us. My wife called to the butler to bring her fur cape, which she had not previously worn in the plains. The puzzled butler had never before heard of such a garment, and so she gave a vivid description of it and its where-

abouts, illustrating the new word 'fur' with the libellous explanation of 'like hair of dog.' The butler returned triumphantly with the required garment and examined it with interest before handing it over and asking: 'This *English* dog, Madam?' Which reminds me of the ingenious dhobi who washed the warm coat provided for our dog when in the hills, and carefully included it in his list as 'one dog's body.'

Arriving home on one occasion, I inquired for my wife. 'Madam in kitchen,' said the butler, 'roaring at cook.' What a delightfully nostalgic picture that can conjure up to all who have lived in India and engaged in the unending and hopeless battle with the Indian cook! No crossword-puzzle could compete with the daily perversion of the truth which he blandly served up as his bazaar account.

A surprise and detailed investigation of our dog's meal one evening revealed that it was entirely vegetarian. Then followed, in rapid succession, an inspection of our own plates, the birth of a suspicion, and an immediate descent upon the kitchen, which revealed our cook contentedly preparing our steak for his own supper, while we were eating the scraps purchased for the dog, who, following the example of a proverbial predecessor, 'had none.'

And now the clan is dying and nearly dead. The European population dwindles, and the sons of those who served us seek other outlets for their ingenuity, such as are not forthcoming in the service of the Indians who are to-day replacing the European. We of the earlier generation shed a tear in memory of the good qualities of our servants and forget the tears of rage and frustration that their other qualities so often brought to us.

Allure

*Young lassies oft will
Mince and smile,
Young laddies wince
And sigh,*

*When gleaming hair is
'Set' in style
And little heels
Are high!*

JAMES MACALPINE.



The Little Scullion

MATHEW HAYNES

IT was the third Friday in the month, the day when normally the little scullion was off—off, that is, after the pots for the midday meal had been washed and scoured, and that in itself was a fair undertaking, for they used to eat considerably in those times. But it got done at last, and the little scullion went off to the forest for the rest of the day.

The forest was dark and gloomy in patches, especially in winter, and reputed to be full of fabulous beasts. Some, indeed, she had seen from a distance, such as the gryphon and the wyvern, for, when they got tired of flying about the sky azure, they used to settle in the branches of the trees vert or sable, according to the season, and make the vague barking or roaring sounds that went with their conglomerate anatomy. Others of the beasts she had seen from nearer—the lions couchant and the lions passant, whom she rather pitied for their rheumatic gait, and even the lions regardant, who were rather a disdainful lot on the whole—‘They might,’ she thought, ‘just as well be lions disregardant, so far as I’m concerned.’

Consequently, it was little surprise when she went into a glade and found a unicorn standing with his horn firmly fixed in a tree and swearing violently to himself. He was

making the most forcible efforts to free himself, straining and pulling and twisting his neck, but all to no purpose.

‘Excuse me,’ said the little scullion after a little while, ‘but is there anything I could do to help you, sir?’

The unicorn rested for a moment and said: ‘Oh, my feathers and white ears, what shall I do? This is the way they catch unicorns, you know, so I was just trying a bit of civil defence. My horn grows screw-wise, you see, and I thought that, if I did get caught in this way, all I should have to do would be to unscrew it by twisting myself around, but the more I do it the harder I seem to be imbedded in this too, too solid oak.’ And again he started pulling and heaving and twisting and tugging and lugging and cursing and swearing, but it didn’t do any good.

When he stopped again, the little scullion had a look at the horn, which undoubtedly had got a twist in it. Then she said to the unicorn: ‘Excuse me, but would you do something that sounds rather silly? Try to screw yourself into the tree a bit more. It works that way sometimes.’

The unicorn thought a bit. ‘It certainly sounds damn stupid to me, but I suppose I can’t be any worse off,’ and with that he started

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

a complicated gymnastic performance, turning his head hard over to the right, moving his body to the left, lying down, rolling over to the right, getting up and putting his head straight, then repeating the whole performance—and, to his astonishment, out came his horn.

'It's quite simple really,' said the little scullion. 'You see, you've got a left-hand thread in your horn, so if you try to screw yourself *in*, you really come *out*.'

'Most odd,' said the unicorn. 'I suppose I didn't know that because I can't get a sight of my horn even if I squint up, and I've only seen it in a shaving-mirror that someone left in the forest, which would reverse it. How stupid! But indeed I am most grateful, and you must let me do something for you. Are you happy in your work?'

THE unicorn's question was rather an abrupt change of subject, but the little scullion thought for a moment and said: 'Yes, I think so. There's me that's a scullion, and all that I have to do is to scour the pots on the inside when the cook has finished with them, and leave the outside black so that they pick up the heat better, and I get half a day every third Friday. And Cook is quite nice to me as a rule, and there's the turnspit to talk to, and sometimes he helps me with the pots, when he's done his own work. I can't honestly complain, you know.'

But the unicorn was on his mettle. It wasn't very often that you met a nice intelligent girl, even though she was only a scullion, with a mechanical mind, and who knew a left-hand thread when she saw one, and what to do about it. It was really up to him to be helpful in return, for he didn't like these long-term debts, which always came due at some awkward time. 'Have you ever heard of Vocational Guidance?' he asked.

'Isn't that to learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me?', for the little scullion knew some of her catechism as well as about screws.

'That's the general idea, certainly, but we've improved a lot on it nowadays, you know. Do it scientifically—with graphs and things,' and he waved his off fore rather vaguely in the air, to show what he meant. 'But I had a great advance on that before I became a unicorn. I was a wizard, you see,

and I used to put people actually into the situations to try. Better than just doing aptitude tests. But that was before my accident, and I'm not sure that I could do it now. May I try, just to show you?'

The little scullion was doubtful, but very obliging.

'WELL,' said the unicorn, 'how would you like to be a soldier? A big one, I mean, and not just anybody.' And before the little scullion could get out an answer to that, he waved a hoof—and there she was, dressed in scarlet and gold, on a big and fidgety horse, with a battalion of men in front of her, and the Inspecting General just coming up.

'What on earth do I do now?' she anxiously asked the adjutant, and when he said gruffly, 'Just pull 'em up and give the general salute,' she didn't feel that he was being very helpful. So she burst out crying, for she was only a little girl really, and the tears ran all down her big walrus moustache and started to tarnish the gold braid.

'There, there,' said the unicorn, carefully wiping her face with one of his tufts, for he was kindly, and only trying to help, 'it wasn't real, you know. Would you like to be a Queen?'

So she sat on the big gold throne while all the courtiers and the dukes and the earls and the high nobles and their beautiful ladies came and dropped her bows and curtsies. 'All very nice,' she thought, but, never having met anyone higher than Cook, she hardly appreciated the honour they did her. After the first hour, her neck began to ache with the continual nodding in return, and her corsets became tighter and tighter, and she knew she couldn't undo them, and the procession of dreary and rather empty faces went on and on, as though it would never end.

'Well,' said the unicorn, as she found herself in the glade once more, 'how about an archbishopric?'

The little scullion was shaking her head before he had finished speaking. 'Do you think that perhaps you're aiming too high for me?'

'I don't know, you know,' said the unicorn, 'but perhaps you're right,' and before she could speak he had slipped her into Woolworths as a manageress. But there she had to stand all day, and go round and be rude to

the girls if they didn't do their jobs properly, so that didn't suit her either.

Then they tried a bank clerk (arithmetic poor), B.B.C. announcer (too many impossible words), lorry driver (too many damn fools on the roads), tobacco-shop assistant (no cigarettes), cook (too hot), chemist (too many scruples), then tinker, tailor, soldier (a private this time), sailor, rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief, butcher, baker, candlestick-maker, and then in desperation right through the alphabet, starting with author, book-binder, choreographer, and as far as xylophonist, yard man, and zymologist, which last caused them a bit of trouble, but the unicorn said it was a technical term for a brewer. But there were snags to all the jobs, and the little scullion never felt really happy in any, though some were very exciting and some were very interesting and some were very well paid.

So at last she thanked the unicorn very much for all the trouble he had taken and said what a very pleasant afternoon it had been, much better than the cinema would be when

THE PUN AND THE PUNDITS

it was invented, for she had actually been all these people; but she thought a little of each of them was quite enough, and please not to bother about her any more, really.

And the unicorn said, 'Well, I don't know, you know,' two or three times more, and thanked her for telling him about the left-hand thread, which he would most certainly remember, and off he trotted into the forest.

WHEN the little scullion got back to the scullery it was still quite a while before curfew, and she found the turnspit cleaning the pots and pans. 'Hello!' he greeted her. 'You're back early. Going to put in some extra beauty-sleep?' for he was a pleasant and chatty rascal, and liked a change from spinning the joints in front of the fire.

'Not much use to me,' she said. 'Move along a bit and let me give you a hand with those pans.' And then she made a remark, almost to herself, which really surprised him. 'It's nice to get back to a sensible solid job of work that one can do properly.'

The Pun and the Pundits

D. M. S. MACKENZIE

A SLANG term which came into fashionable use at, or soon after, the Restoration in 1688, the word 'pun' has been defined as 'the employment of a word or phrase, having two different meanings, so as to bring them into striking incongruity.' Thus Samuel Foote, the actor, when challenged by a woman: 'I hear you can make a pun on any subject; make one on the King,' replied: 'Madam, the King is no subject.' And when *The Beggar's Opera*, by the impecunious John Gay, was successfully produced by Rich in London in 1728, it was said that the production had 'made Rich gay and Gay rich.'

Although verbal play, based on homonyms, words of different meanings but having the same sound, is to be found in ancient religious books, including the Bible, and was practised of old by cultured Greeks and Romans, it was not until the 16th century that it became a popular pastime in England, and the somewhat chequered career which the pun has since followed has prompted the statement that nothing illustrates the uncertainty of literary taste more clearly than the vicissitudes of the pun in this country since the days when Shakespeare and his fellow-Elizabethans first revelled in its use.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Shakespeare used the pun a great deal, and with a high degree of skill. For him it was a literary device, which could be exploited for dramatic ends as well as for popular entertainment in the mouths of clowns and jesters. Thus, in order to increase the horror of her crime, he put a pun into the mouth of Lady Macbeth, when she said of the murdered Duncan:

*If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal!
For it must seem their guilt.*

In a language so rich in homonyms as Shakespeare's English, the pun was liable to abuse by excessive use or vulgar handling; and so we find Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* exclaiming after one of Launcelot Gobbo's puns: 'How every fool can play upon the word! I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence; and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots.'

Jonathan Swift was fond of the pun. He once described it as 'a virtue that most effectively promotes the end of good fellowship, which is laughing.' He also used to say that no one disliked the pun but those who could not make one. Nevertheless, he resented witticisms at his own expense. 'During one day at a public dinner of the Mayor and Corporation at Cork,' Thomas Sheridan tells us, 'he observed that Alderman Brown, father of the Bishop of that diocese, fed very heartily without speaking a word, and was so intent upon his business, as to become a proper object of ridicule. Accordingly he threw out many successful jests upon the Alderman, who fed on with the silence of a still sow, neither seeming to regard what the Dean said, nor at all moved by the repeated bursts of laughter at his expense. Toward the latter end of the meal, Swift happened to be helped to some roast duck, and desired to have some apple sauce on the same plate; upon which the Alderman bawled out "Mr Dean, you eat your duck like a goose." This unexpected sally threw the company into a long and continued fit of laughter, and Swift was silent the rest of the day.'

ALTHOUGH there was a literary reaction against the pun during the 18th century, its popularity suffered only partial eclipse, for it had protagonists as well as detractors. Among the latter were Joseph Addison,

Samuel Johnson, and Sydney Smith. Addison wrote somewhat pontifically in an essay on the history of the pun: 'It is indeed impossible to kill a weed which the soil has a natural disposition to produce. The seeds of punning are in the minds of all men, and, though they may be subdued by reason, reflection, and good sense, they will be very apt to shoot up in the greatest genius that is not broken and cultivated by the values of art.'

In his famous dictionary Dr Johnson borrowed a quotation from Addison to define the pun as 'an equivocation, a quibble; an expression where a word has at once different meanings.' And he defined 'quibble' as 'a low conceit, depending on the sound of words; a pun.' If Dr Johnson's attitude to the pun was derogatory, James Boswell's was somewhat patronising when he wrote: 'I think no innocent species of wit or pleasantry should be suppressed; and that a good pun may be admitted among the smaller excellences of literary conversation.'

Although Sydney Smith—once described as 'the wittiest man of his day'—did not disdain to use the pun on occasions, as, for example, when he told his humourless brother: 'You and I are exceptions to the laws of nature; you have risen by your gravity, and I have sunk by my levity,' nevertheless he delivered himself in one of his lectures as follows: 'Puns are in very bad repute. . . . The wit of words is so miserably inferior to the wit of ideas that it is very deservedly driven out of good company.'

Charles Lamb was so far from agreeing with this view that he once wrote in a letter to his friend S. T. Coleridge: 'A pun is a noble thing *per se*. . . . It fills the mind; it is as perfect as a sonnet—better.' He also expressed the hope that his 'last breath be drawn through a pipe and exhaled as a pun.' It must, however, be admitted that Lamb's puns were not of a very high order. While praising him in other respects, Thomas Moore described him as 'full of villainous and abortive puns, which he miscarries every minute.' Yet on one occasion, at least, he showed a ready wit. When, having fallen downstairs after a convivial evening at a friend's house, and hearing someone calling from above to ask what he was doing, he called back: 'Yser rolling rapidly.'

Theodore Hook, who acquired at an early age much fame as a wit and a practical joker, and who did not himself disdain to use the

THE PUN AND THE PUNDITS

pun, seems to have felt that it was desirable to discourage its use by young persons, for one of his *Cautionary Verses to Youth of Both Sexes* runs:

*My little dears, who learn to read,
Pray early learn to shun
That very foolish thing indeed
The people call a Pun.*

DESPITE the disparagement and censure of the pundits of the Augustan Age of English literature, the pun, together with other 'low' forms of humour, such as practical joking and the cult of nonsense, staged a comeback in the early part of the 19th century, and by the middle of Queen Victoria's reign the tide was in full flood, with Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, and W. S. Gilbert figuring among its most popular and successful exponents.

A forerunner of this movement was the poet Thomas Hood, deemed by some to have been the greatest of all English punsters. He was also one of the earliest contributors to *Punch*, which made its first appearance in 1841. Typical of his puns are the following:

*Ben Battle was a soldier bold,
And used to war's alarms!
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,
So he laid down his arms!*

*The field kept getting more select!
Each thicket served to thin it.*

'Of all games or sports cricket appears to be the most trying to the temper, for a player cannot lose his wicket without being put out.'

*They went and told the sexton, and
The sexton tolled the bell.*

Nor was the cult of the pun confined to the humorous writers of Victoria's reign; it was also given free rein in the music-halls and exploited by celebrities, or—if they failed in this respect—it was credited to them in the stories which were circulated in the clubs and homes of the people.

Thus we read that when the Queen expressed her regret to Bishop Hill of Sodor and Man that Gladstone was not a Tory, the Bishop replied: 'It is easy to make him one, Ma'am. Turn him round and round until he becomes Dizzy.' The Bishop himself, we are told, was fond of asking the riddle: 'When is the Bishop of Sodor and Man like the rising sun?'

The answer was: 'When he tips the little hills with gold.'

Gladstone met Bishop Magee, an Irishman, later to become Archbishop of York, in Pall Mall. 'I hear, my Lord,' said Gladstone, 'that you don't like my idea of dealing with the Irish question.' 'It's not your dealing I object to,' retorted the Bishop, 'it's your shuffling!'

Judge Huddleston used to refer to his wife, the Lady Diana de Vere Beauclerk, rather too frequently and ostentatiously—so it was thought—as 'Lady Di.' On being knighted in 1875, he asked Disraeli what motto he should choose for his coat of arms. 'Never say die,' advised Dizzy.

BY the beginning of the 20th century the tide was beginning to slacken, but many of the jokes in *Punch* were still based on puns. Thus a 1901 number contained the following:

A DEFINITION

New Governess: Now Tommy, sit up and tell me what are Weights and Measures.

Tommy: Please, Miss Jones, Waits are people who come howling outside at Christmas-time, and Measures are what Papa says he'll take to stop 'em.

As the century progresses we find the ebbing tide being sustained by the puns in crossword puzzles and wireless programmes. Neither have the celebrities lost the art, or, at all events, the more popular and glamorous ones have not. Thus when G. K. Chesterton is approached during the First World War by a lady who asks him: 'And why aren't you out at the Front?' he replies characteristically: 'If you look at me from the side, madam, you will see that I am.'

F. E. Smith, later Lord Birkenhead, meets a Labour M.P. in the House of Commons and inquires after his health. 'Oh 'ell,' replies the M.P., 'I've an awful 'ead-ache!' 'Have you?' says Smith innocently. 'Well, why not take two aspirates?'

Lord Curzon receives, as Foreign Secretary, a telegram concerning the unauthorised activities of some monks on the Continent, who, in the words of the telegram, had 'violated their vows.' The Post Office had mistakenly put 'cows.' Curzon dips his golden pen in the red ink and writes: 'Obviously a case for a Papal Bull.'

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

During one of his speeches as Prime Minister in the Second World War, Winston Churchill is interrupted by Dr Edith Summer-skill, who signifies her objection to his reference to 'men only' by calling out: 'And women!' Winston turns blandly in her direction and remarks: 'It is always the stock answer that man embraces woman.'

From our own personal experience we may perhaps be inclined to agree with Theodore Hook that punning by the very young is to be deprecated. We may also support Sydney

Smith in his contention that mere verbal wit is miserably inferior to the wit of ideas, unless—as is sometimes the case—the two are combined. We may further regard all forms of wit as inferior to those brands of humour in which the heart rules rather than the head. Still, we may be willing to concede that—in expert hands—an occasional, discreet, and well-timed use of one of the most ancient, universal, albeit derided forms of wit is to be commended—more especially in cases where it is 'as perfect as a sonnet'—or 'better.'

Country Gates

DAVID PARRY

EVER since the abandonment of the open-fields in favour of the enclosure system gates have been a feature of the English countryside, and to-day they are so common that we are apt to take their existence for granted, rarely giving a thought either to the craftsmen who made them or to the ways in which they are built. Indeed, few people seem to be aware of the enormous variety of regional styles, and no one, to my knowledge, has yet succeeded in compiling a representative list of the types to be found in the British Isles.

Although a certain design may be typical of a county or district, gates first and foremost reflect the ideas and skill of their makers, and it is always worth while paying a visit to the shop of the village carpenter. In the past, when travel was laborious and hamlets had to be more or less self-supporting, this craftsman was called upon to do all manner of jobs, and his trade would appear to be safe for as long as there are things to repair on the farm. The demand for locally-made furniture, wagons, and so on, has undoubtedly declined, but the village carpenter still receives orders for such items as sheep-racks and ladders, and

probably he will have his own names for the different components of the particular kind of gate in which he specialises.

In general, however, the horizontal bars are known as rails, while the braces are those pieces fastened on diagonally to give additional strength. The middle upright, if one exists, is called a slat, and the two others are termed the head and the harr, the latter, of much thicker timber, being at the end at which the gate is hung. The top and bottom rails, which have to take the bolts of the hinges, may be a good deal stouter than the rest, and in some gates it will be noticed that there are as few as four rails, in the majority five or, more seldom, six. When there are only three, one will see, alternatively, numerous regularly-spaced slats, and even the gate-posts differ from place to place.

The arrangement of the braces of country gates is extremely interesting, and from time to time one comes across extraordinarily elaborate creations, though for the most part we may be sure that the craftsman had a very sound reason for adopting the pattern in question. Neither are the methods of hanging a gate identical by any means in all areas,

COUNTRY GATES

and when the woodwork is finished the carpenter must enlist the services of the blacksmith, who, besides supplying the hooks and catches, may help to ensure that they are correctly positioned. The gate should swing to and fro easily, and first-rate forgings are essential if it is to last for twenty, thirty, perhaps fifty, years.

Mention of the blacksmith recalls the wrought-iron gates which he himself used to fashion, and which he continues to make when opportunity offers; and, whereas these are not country gates in the strict sense, delightful examples are to be admired in our churches, parks, and estates. Needless to say, this class of work merits an article to itself, and it is not so long ago that every hamlet craftsman depended on the smith for the tools of his trade.

NATURALLY, the life of a farm gate depends to a large extent on the quality of the wood bought by the carpenter, and, provided the price of the finished article justifies the increased cost, hand-cleft timber will almost invariably be chosen if this is available. Whereas sawing cuts across the grain of the wood, cleaving follows it, and posts and rails produced in this manner are both stronger and more resistant to the weather. For how many centuries the cleaving-axe has been used in our forests it is difficult to say, but very considerable knowledge is required before a man is able to tackle, for instance, an oak-tree with the minimum of waste.

Apart from felling the trees and splitting them ready for sale, some of the woodland

craftsmen actually carry on carpentry in huts set up in the clearings, and in such surroundings one may catch a glimpse of a hurdle-maker weaving riven hazel-rods on a curved mould. These wattle-hurdles afford good protection to sheep, but much more like gates are the open hurdles of willow or ash.

Having obtained his willow branches, the hurdle-maker splits them with his frommard, then cutting them to the required lengths. The hurdles are assembled on a special frame, and the first move is to fit the rails, four to seven in number, into mortises in the heads. Next, a central upright will be added, and to complete the task the woodman nails on two diagonal braces. At the end of the day the hurdles must be stacked to season, and each pile is weighted down to prevent warping as the sap dries out. Incidentally, open hurdles are not infrequently used on the farm as temporary gates, and there is the advantage that they can be turned out fairly rapidly by an experienced hand.

Woodmen also deal in posts for fences, and, though the tendency is to use more and more barbed-wire, the carpenter still gets an occasional chance to work in beech and oak. Because entrances have had to be widened to allow the passage of mechanical equipment, very old gates are few and far between, but some stiles, on the contrary, are remarkably ancient, and Richard Jefferies mentions that in the 19th century it was the custom to earmark the axle-tree of a discarded cart or wagon for the top bar. Selected wood of this sort lasts practically indefinitely if now and then given a coat of paint, and those stiles built of roughly-hewn stone will surely remain intact for hundreds of years.

If Joy Be Brief

*Wild swan on the lake of my heart,
Your snowy image from its mirrored dark
Too soon departs.*

*Young leaves on the wash of the sky
Are patterned clear as only almond knows.
But day will close.*

*As swan, so leaf,
If joy be brief,
My thought perpetuates.*

N. J.



Leaves from a Doctor's Diary

A. S. G.

BY door-bell and by telephone the general medical practitioner is on constant call from without and from within. In the nature of things he sees much of the tragedy of life, but, happily, much also of the comedy.

One day when I answered the telephone I was amazed to be asked for the loan of ten shirts. For the moment I was not sure if I had any, though I knew I had one on. Luckily it was not long till the speaker explained the meaning of his request. He was in command of a Boy Scout troop spending the week-end near by. It had been a shockingly wet afternoon and the boys unfortunately had been out on a route-march and had got thoroughly soaked. The Scoutmaster did not want to send the boys back home to Glasgow, so he appealed to the local hospital, of which I was then in charge, and so the message was passed on to me. Naturally I told Matron to lend the boys as many shirts as she could.

Somehow the door night-bell was often more of a nightmare than even night calls on the telephone. On a quiet still night, if one were awake, one could hear the front-gate being opened and then the treading of the messenger on the gravelled walk to the front-

door. During the few minutes of waiting till the bell rang one anticipated all sorts of happenings to all sorts of patients. On one such occasion—it was well after midnight—I received the most unusual request: 'Doctor, will you please telephone for my own doctor.' However, as I considered the petitioner's voice much more melodious than my own, I suggested that, while he used my telephone, it might be better if he telephoned himself. Besides, I understand that doctors are not specially enamoured of night calls.

DURING my visiting rounds I found, like most doctors, I think, that children are, of all patients, the most interesting. As a rule, while they have an original, indeed at times an odd, way of expressing themselves, they seldom fail to demonstrate very forcibly their meaning. Certainly, one can count very confidently on much helpful information from them, as they seldom mislead.

One remembers the picture in *Punch* where the doctor is examining his little patient's spine. The patient had been complaining of chest and stomach pains and the medical man

LEAVES FROM A DOCTOR'S DIARY

was suspicious of generalised tuberculosis. While the doctor was carefully palpating the back, the little patient turned her head and said: 'Doctor, if you're looking for my tummy, it's on the other side.'

I recall the case of the little girl who was looking out of the study window along with her grandmother. They had noticed a gentleman in a bath-chair being wheeled along past the house. Following up the child's comment on the gentleman's aged appearance, the grandmother said: 'The gentleman is not so old, after all.' On the girl strongly disagreeing, the grandmother remarked: 'Well, if you call him old, what do you call me?' To this the little girl replied: 'Oh, Gran, you're nearly dead.'

I was once doing duty for a friend of mine. This doctor had two large moles on his face. One morning I was called to see one of his young patients, but this little patient at first would have nothing to do with me. She called to her mother: 'Send that man away. I want my own doctor with the currants on his face.'

If I might give you a word of advice, I would ask you to be open and frank with your children when you take them to see their doctor or when you call the doctor to see them. Otherwise, you may make it very embarrassing for yourself, and for the doctor. For example, one time I was called in to see a child. I was introduced as a very great friend of the father. I was getting on splendidly with my examination when, suddenly, the patient called: 'Mother, he's a doctor. I know him by his smell.' On another occasion the patient threatened me thus: 'If you come near me, I'll spit on your glasses.' But the mother checked her child and, remonstrating with her, explained what a nice doctor had come to see her. Unfortunately for the mother, the child replied: 'Well, mummy, it was only last night you said you would never think of having him for yourself.'

I had one delightful little patient on my daily visiting-list. Unhappily I had grave fears that this little girl, who was nearly four years old, was suffering from generalised tuberculosis. Although her immediate complaint was a discharging sore on her right shin-bone, I had examined her thoroughly at first and, strange as it may seem, this greatly amused Molly. Much later, during my subsequent visits, and when I found no

further need for such a general examination, Molly asked me one day if I wasn't going to telephone any more to her tummy? To please Molly, I promised to examine her with my stethoscope next day.

One time when I visited Molly she told me it was her birthday. She had got a nice new dolly as a present from her father. Her old doll, Freddie, had been put away, because he was so old, and she now had Daisy. Freddie, she told me, was now very old, because she had got him last birthday. 'He's at least one year old,' said Molly. Then I asked her how old her father was. Molly screwed up the side of her face, shut one eye, and looked up as if to study the ceiling. At last she replied: 'Well, I really don't know. We've had him for quite a time now.'

Another young patient of mine, much older than Molly, attended with her mother at my consulting-room. The mother was distressed at the mysterious appearance of a skin-rash all over her daughter's face. At first I must admit I was greatly perplexed about this eruption. Then I said: 'If I knew you used a face-powder, I would at once blame that.' Fortunately the mother, to emphasise her assumed abhorrence of such make-up, reproached her daughter by saying: 'Yes, I thought so, Lydia, that's that abominable stuff auntie sent you.' But the daughter replied: 'No, mother, that's the stuff you bought me.'

BUT to get to our day's visiting. One day I was asked by an anxious daughter, who, perforce, had to go out to business, if I would pay a visit to her house to see her aged mother. The patient, though frail and quite deaf needed, I was told, no attention, only the daughter had wisely decided that her mother should be seen occasionally by her doctor, and on this morning a kindly neighbour had agreed to be within call to get my report. After my examination, the patient, who did not hear or understand a single word I said to her, asked me: 'An' are you an insurance agent?'

About this time I experienced my second case of twins. After an early morning's sitting I was hurrying home to get toshed up for the day's work. I was walking and carrying my 'wee black bag' when I met the carrier, and aboard was the locally famous 'Willum.' Willum shouted out: 'Hullo,

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

doctor, so you're still takin' photies?' So I could reply: 'Yes, Willum, groups.'

I remember one patient with a bad heart. He had had a sharp attack and I had advised him to rest in bed till the end of the week, when I would call in to see him again. This patient, I knew, was a keen football fan and, as there was a very important match on the Saturday, I decided to visit him on the Friday to allow him up, if it seemed wise. He was highly delighted to see me on the Friday, as he said that he was wearying on me coming back because he had been in bed for a full week and he was utterly tired of it. However, his delight very quickly changed to dismay when I proceeded to examine him and discovered that he was in bed with his trousers on.

One day I had just come in from my morning visiting when I got two urgent calls by telephone. The first was about a little boy who had had a bad burning accident. I had just accepted this call when I was summoned back to the telephone. This time an elderly lady, one of my regular patients who stayed close at hand, spoke. 'Doctor, will you please come round at once. My sister is staying with me for a few days and she is very ill. In fact, I think she is just dying.' Having accepted the first urgent call, I explained that I could not possibly come at once, indeed not for at least an hour, so she had better call in a neighbouring doctor. However, the lady said that as her sister was going to Edinburgh with the 2.30 train I might try to come before then. I got both visits done before 2 p.m.—the wee chap to hospital, the lady, home.

There are a great many people who make the very most, or, shall we say, the very worst, of their ills. But there are also others. Curiously, that very morning of the two urgent calls I had been out to see a dear old lady of the second kind. She had been ailing for a long time, yet but few realised that this bright, calm, old gentlewoman was sorely tried both mentally and physically. As her doctor, I knew she was longing to be at rest. Strangely enough, it was just on my return from my visit to her that I was informed that she had passed away. However, my wife tells me that when our maid who had received the message heard its purport, her remark was: 'Aye, my it's terrible! The one minute you see folk, and the next minute you see them they're no' there.'

ON one occasion I had made an appointment with a young business man who found it unsuitable to come to my surgery. He was to attend at the consulting-room at the house. As it chanced, he turned up a few minutes earlier than the hour of appointment, and when I got home in time to see him I found him engrossed in examining a specially fine specimen of a flying beetle. The beetle and its history alike fascinated me and I had had the beast preserved in spirit in a container—a small sweet-bottle—which stood on the mantelshelf in my room. After the usual salutations my patient inquired as to the history of the specimen. I told him that a medical missionary friend of mine out East had removed it from the wall of the shack of one of his patients. My friend's rejoinder as he gasped with amazement was: 'Aren't you doctors wonderful!' Although I did not at once quite understand this sudden adulation, not realising that I was supposed to be speaking in medical terms, I heartily agreed with him.

Another story from the mission-field comes to my mind. My brother-in-law, who was Principal of the Hope Waddell Institute at Calabar, had just returned from furlough in this country and was paying his customary visit to the station hospital. When he was coming away, he met one of his old pupils going to the hospital and he saluted him thus: 'Well, Vincent, you're back again.' But the boy replied: 'No, sir. Please, sir, it's my belly.'

Besides his usual visitations and surgeries, a doctor has got to be prepared for many interruptions by accidents or sudden illnesses. One such incident I remember might be said to have begun with the sudden illness and ended with the accident. A local terrier had been angered by a strange dog which a young lady visitor had taken with her as she went down town shopping. The local terrier attacked the strange dog. In the general mêlée the lady visitor became excited and, as I discovered later was her wont, was seized by a hysterical fit. Accordingly, she was carried into what happened to be a small fancy-goods shop. I was called to see the patient and with difficulty made my way in through the crowd. The poor girl was lying on the floor, while several stalwarts, men and women, were standing by, on guard as it were. As I bent over the patient to examine her, I found that on opening her right eye her right arm

LEAVES FROM A DOCTOR'S DIARY

spasmodically shot out, and knocked over a stand of small leather purses and nick-nacks, and these came tumbling on top of us. On examining her left eye, the spasm affected her left leg and foot, and she kicked over a wire basket containing many multicoloured small rubber balls and several ping-pong balls. It was not long till the scene was like a veritable shooting-saloon, with its myraids of bouncing coloured balls. Unfortunately one of these particularly high-bouncing balls stotted ferociously up to the ceiling and on its return it broke through the thread from which was suspended an open fly-paper on duty. This came wafting down on the scene, just as I was busy looking critically into my patient's eyes, and from that very moment I became greatly attached to my new patient. But it is not always that such an episode ends so happily.

One time a lady visitor to our house was hurrying along to the railway-station to catch an early-forenoon train. On the road she overtook one of my male patients, whom she had often seen before. The man was obviously also making his way to the station. It was a dry frosty morning. He was limping badly and, although my friend was in good time for her train, she hesitated to set the pace for her lame companion. However, she was urged to hurry on, as my patient could not hurry. In excusing herself, she remarked: 'It's a bad morning for sciatica.' 'Whit sciatica?' called my patient. 'This is no'

sciatica. I've got three tae to ma twa feet.'

I had given a patient an appointment for 8 p.m. at the house one Thursday. He was to come to have the wax from his left ear removed by syringing. I had known this patient for a long time and he had always impressed me with his keen interest in all things medical. When I got to the house, he was waiting. After the usual salutations, we got down to business. Firstly he had to be assured that the operation, as he called it, would not unfit him for business next day, as he evidently had an important engagement that afternoon. I at long last got him to recline on the couch and, after adjusting the waterproof bib to protect the collar, I placed a basin of warm water and the syringe nicely in position. Suddenly, to my amazement and great discomfort, the patient shot both legs high into the air and for the moment appeared like a sheep on its back. For my part, I was like a fish out of water. Just at that moment the maid on the house-telephone announced that my patient's taxi had arrived. Despite my assurance, he was not quite certain that he would be able to walk home after the operation. Of course, he made it clear that his wife had sent the taxi and that it was she who was really anxious about his operation. Again, she had told him that if ever he felt he was going to faint he must lower his head. He had judged that the best thing to do in this case was to shoot up his feet.

Time

*Time. What is Time?
A figment of man's brain
To please philosophers.
What fools we are
To let Time rule our lives.
Our selves are masters here.
Need months be years
When absence drags the wheel
And slows the ticking clock
We watch, afraid?
Must weeks seem only days
When love is unconfined?
Command the hours
We have together, now,
To be eternity!*

VIVIAN HENDERSON.

Twice-Told Tale.

XXV.—The Art of Listening

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of January 1853.]

THE art of listening is highly commended as a study worth acquiring, although allowed to be a science of no easy acquisition.

You must look, but not too fully, in the face of the person speaking. If he hesitates, take no notice, or gently furnish him with the word he wants. If anything interrupts him, do not wait until he takes up his narrative, but observe: 'You were saying so and so, pray continue.' If two people, in the heat of discussion, begin to speak at the same time, both must stop and request his adversary to lead the way.

If any one is relating a tiresome story, which appears to the relater very amusing, be sure to smile; look, on the contrary, sad, if it is one you are supposed or expected to be grieved about. If the person is old, it is brutality to do otherwise; but if your equal in years, or your intimate acquaintance, you may without rudeness say to him, in order to induce him to go on and finish the sooner: 'Well, and so!' Never interrupt a story-teller to ask explanations, or to have names repeated, &c., unless you fear, from not understanding, that your reply may be irrelevant; and then say something in this form: 'I ask many pardons, but fearing to lose the thread of your interesting conversation, &c., will you kindly repeat,' &c. If any one is so ill-advised as to tell stories you are positive cannot be true, you may say: 'If I did not know your veracity—or—Had any one but yourself told me that, I should have had great difficulty in giving credit to it'; but never coarsely express your disbelief: the fault of another affords no excuse for yours; even the Apostle Peter, who never dreamed of inculcating hollow politeness, says, *Be*

courteous. Indeed, good-manners may be learned from the study of the New Testament and Proverbs, without going to any other source: an *uncourteous Christian* is an anomaly. It is also a sign of the worst breeding, if, when a stupid story-teller is maiming an anecdote, one more clever than himself takes it out of his mouth. However better he may tell the tale, no one ought to listen to it with attention, from pity for the original narrator, to whom of right it belongs, and whose intentions were to entertain, if he had not the talent to succeed particularly well.

When any one advances what you know to be false, or, at anyrate, do not believe, you must still keep politeness in view—therefore never commit the rudeness of saying: 'If what you say is true'—'If madame is positive as to the truth of what she has just now reported'—but, 'I may be mistaken, although,' &c.—'Excuse my error, but it appears to me that,' &c.—'A thousand pardons, but I was under the impression,' &c.; and so on.

If any person, more particularly the old or ailing, relates as new an anecdote that you were acquainted with before, never show that it is so, but listen attentively as though you heard it for the first time, even should it happen to be one of your own especial stories that he is recounting. If memory, however, returns, and the aged person begs your pardon for his forgetfulness, beg him to continue, as 'you tell the story so well, you quite throw a new light upon it.' Should he hesitate, stop, and only appear uncertain, assure him the facts are unknown to you, rather than pain a poor invalid by reminding him of his infirmities.

Science at Your Service

A VISIBLE COOKER-OVEN

A NEW feature introduced into the design of a well-known electric-cooker is an inner door of glass. This second door enables oven-cooking to be inspected without loss of heat. The inner door is full-sized and the glass is claimed to remain free from steam-misting; it is described as armour-plate glass, so the risk of breaking can be assumed to be very small. The other features of the cooker are up-to-date, but as these are well-known enough there is no need here to enumerate them.

FOR WASHING CARS

One of the best-known manufacturers of rubber products are marketing a simple but novel appliance for washing cars. It consists of a block of sponge-rubber, 6 inches in length, 2 inches deep, and 2½ inches wide. At the back of this block an attached socket accepts the water-delivering end of ordinary ½-inch hose-piping. Throughout washing operations water from the hose will flow evenly through the face of the sponge. At the same time the attachment will not impede manipulation; indeed, the socket holding the hose-end can be used as a handle. Free from purchase-tax, the appliance is most moderately priced.

SEWAGE AND FOOD PRODUCTION

Few people are unaware that one of modern civilisation's greatest wastes is the enormous discard of sewage from cities and towns. The demands of sanitation have been studied far more than the demands of soil. Only a limited number of civic authorities make efforts to convert sewage into useful manure; almost everywhere sewage is treated to minimise its pollution nuisance and then discarded into rivers or the sea. Hundreds and hundreds of tons of plant-foods, acquired in the first place from soils, are thus lost. The old device of the sewage-farm is scarcely practicable to-day, for a large acreage is needed to deal with the sewage from quite a small population; the land-space required cannot be found at economic cost near big centres of living.

However, a new idea that has already been experimentally tested at the University of California may transform this problem. Algæ, the unicellular floating plants often seen in ponds or slow-moving rivers, reproduce, like yeasts, by cell division. It has been realised for some time that algæ have a high food-value and that their artificial cultivation might greatly add to world food-production. Algæ, like ordinary plants, derive their energy from sunlight and take up simple nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphates, potash, etc., from water. So far algæ cultivation has been difficult to develop because of the cost involved in supplying the nutrients; but raw sewage contains the necessary nutrients, albeit in much diluted form. Moreover, one of the best methods of cleansing sewage to-day is oxidation, and algæ, like land plants, continuously emit oxygen during growth. On paper it seemed possible to combine algæ cultivation with sewage treatment; now in experimental practice this has been found to be practicable.

If algæ are grown in a sewage oxidation pond or bed, they reproduce at an exceptionally fast rate. The oxygen released enables sewage to be purified at twenty-five times the normal rate, so that sewage may be passed through the pond much more quickly. The algæ can be removed regularly, even as a daily crop. Dried algæ may contain as much as half their weight of protein. The drying process itself minimises risks of bacterial contamination; final pasteurisation will remove all such risk. It is not, of course, suggested that dried algæ from sewage centres would form part of human diet; but algæ meal could serve as rich protein food for poultry, pigs, and cattle, thus either increasing meat and milk production or releasing for other crops land now used in growing animal feeding-stuffs.

A million gallons—not a large amount—of sewage per day will produce from half to three-quarters of a ton of dried algæ; and at the same time the algæ will have enabled the sewage to be purified many times faster.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

A MAP-MEASURER

A new gadget made from plastics should interest motorists and keen walkers. A small metal guide-wheel is run along the line of route on a map; a marked dial turns according to the movement of the guide-wheel. The measure is set for 1 inch to 1 mile map-scales, but, obviously, simple division or multiplication can provide the mileage when maps of larger or smaller scale are used. The gadget is quite small, easily carried in the pocket. A secondary use can be made of it whenever curves or irregular surfaces have to be measured in circumstances when the more normal ruler or tape-measure cannot be employed; here it is simple to read the dial-scale in real inches rather than in scale-converted miles.

ABOUT THE WEATHER

People who express the view that the weather is not what it used to be are often regarded sceptically. Casual memory no doubt produces uncertain standards for comparing the mixed phenomena that we call 'the weather.' Nevertheless, there is good meteorological evidence for believing that the world's climate may change appreciably and permanently in the next twenty-five to fifty years. At a meeting of meteorologists in the United States last summer a British weather-scientist pointed out that glaciers and the Arctic ice-pack have been retreating for the past century and that they are now at their farthest stage of retreat since the year 1650. If this continues, the world's weather will become markedly warmer, with a tendency for dry years to occur more often. The weather-changes that could come about in this way would bring large economic and political effects. For example, much greater and more rapid prosperity would be associated with Canada's new northwards expansion. The retreat of the glaciers and the ice-pack might be stopped by a succession of very cold winters, but otherwise these steady movements of retreat are unlikely to stop. There would, however, be very adverse consequences if retreat proceeded so far that the Greenland and Arctic ice melted away entirely; this would cause the world's oceans to rise by approximately ten feet and in consequence the world's land areas would be reduced. However, an eventual retreat of northern ice to such an extent as this is not very probable.

UNTAKEN HARVEST

This is the arresting title of a new and important book that deals with the economics of crop losses through pests, diseases, and weeds. It is by George Ordish, Dip. Hort., B.Sc.(Econ.), and is published by Constable & Co. Ltd., at fifteen shillings. No book has previously covered this subject at all adequately, and it is a well-timed contribution to knowledge for two reasons—first, we are increasingly and grimly aware that world food-production is not keeping pace with world population expansion; and, second, the past ten years of scientific research has produced an almost confusing variety of new means for protecting plants from their natural parasites, enemies, and competitors. Mr Ordish discusses with admirable realism crop losses and the methods of avoiding or reducing them. He does not accept scientific claims for this or that spray unless valid figures for costs of material and application have been collected from practical experience and unless the resultant gain in yield exceeds these costs in value. Nor—another sample of his realistic approach—does he evade the dilemma that exists with some crops, notably the soft fruits, that harvest increases may lead to market surpluses and lower prices.

The book contains a wealth of statistics and cost figures and it can only be assumed that the author devoted many years of specialised study to its writing. It is itself an important piece of agricultural and horticultural research. No food-grower, in whatever part of the world he raises crops, should fail to read this book, and it will have nearly as much fascination for ordinary readers whose interest in food is more concerned with consumption.

A TWICE-A-YEAR CLOCK

The Chicago Museum of Science and Industry entombed an unusual clock in the cornerstone of a building last autumn. It is left there to be examined by scientists in 2052. The clock will tick only twice a year. Its time-measuring mechanism is a thermocouple. It will register once whenever Chicago's temperature rises above 85° Fahrenheit; and once whenever the temperature there falls below 15°. This should ensure one tick each summer and one each winter and the years between 1952 and 2052 should be accurately measured.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A FUEL-ECONOMISER AND SMOKE-REDUCER

Technical argument alone will never destroy the unique British attachment to the open-fire. Enclosed-stove heating is much more the domestic custom in other European countries, especially where harder winter-conditions than ours are expectable. The open-fire causes room draughts and gives a low heating-return for the amount of fuel consumed. An interesting explanation of the open-fire's popularity in Britain has recently been suggested—our cloudy winter allows us much less sunlight than some of the colder countries of North-western Europe receive; psychologically, therefore, the cheerful glow of light from an open-fire satisfies a winter deficiency from which we particularly suffer. The closed-stove system, though it would give us more warmth per hundredweight of fuel, cannot meet this need. If this view is accepted—and it surely has partial truth—our open-fire fetish is neither as illogical nor as wasteful as many heating-experts contend.

However, great progress can be, and has been, made in improving the efficiency of open-fire combustion. The variety of all-night-burning, controlled-air-supply grates now offered is excellent evidence of post-war advance. But it is not sufficiently realised that the worst feature of most open-fireplaces is their large flue-openings. It is this that creates room draughts and it is this that takes swiftly out of the room so high a proportion of the fuel's heat. Controlling the air-supply to the grate will not overcome the troubles of the flue. There are clear signs that the next stage in open-fire progress will be in the direction of flue improvement. What is described as a fuel-economiser is now offered by one leading producer of heating appliances. It is an adjustable plate that can be fitted to most 16-inch fireplaces. In effect, this plate extends the leaning-forward and heat-reflecting back of the firebrick area, while at the same time it reduces the area of flue-opening. It is claimed also to minimise the turbulence in flue-airflow that often causes smoke to puff back into the room. The price of this attachment is attractively low, appreciably

less than the cost of 5 cwt. of coal. It should, therefore, pay for itself in fuel-saving in a very short time.

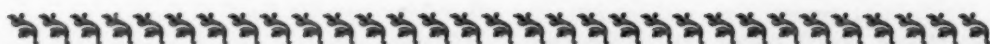
A NEW LIGHTER

A domestic lighter for fixed-position use has been lately marketed. It is held in any desired position, as, for example, on a tiled wall near a cooker or on the cooker's backplate, by a two-inch rubber suction-disc. The lighter is of cylindrical design and protrudes horizontally from the wall-surface. An ebonite striker with a steel tip is held in the lighter; this contains an asbestos wick, which is accessible when required by undoing a screw-cap at the other end of the striker. The cylindrical container is filled with wadding to hold lighter fuel. While in position the striker is impregnated with the fuel. On removal, the striker is struck, like a match, on a bar of flint attached to the upper surface of the container and a flame is obtained. It is said that one filling of the container will last for up to six months of ordinary domestic use. The bar flint on the cylinder and the asbestos wicks are renewable. The appliance is small and neat, the cylinder being chromium-plated.

A PLASTICS IMPROVEMENT

On the whole the synthetic materials generally known now as plastics have been limited in colour or coloured-finish possibilities. Bright colours have been most dominant, with pastel effects perhaps following closely. Some most effective imitations of metallic finishes have been lately introduced by a British company; in particular, good superficial resemblance to pewter and bronze has been obtained in a small range of moulded domestic goods. The pewter imitation is excellent when expressed in simple mug or beaker design; the lack of significant weight when the mug is picked up brings something of a shock. For minor decorative purposes at a low cost plastic articles in these new finishes will not be displeasing. Certainly people who are tired of the bright reds and greens of plastic articles should welcome this innovation.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.



Cultivating Your Soil

WE gardeners have to accept our soils as we find them, we have to work with them and in them, and get the best out of them, and, further, if we are any good at all we should try to improve them. It may be you have a clay soil, and this will be retentive of moisture, and difficult to cultivate because of its heaviness. Clay needs digging and leaving rough in the autumn so as to expose as great an amount of soil surface to the frost and wind as possible. Lime is a first necessity on clays, for it prevents the particles from clinging together, thus making the soil less sticky and binding.

I like a clay, however, because it is a blessing during a hot, dry summer. It is a soil that can be improved by the addition of lots of compost or strawy farmyard manure. Burnt rubbish, coalite and coke ashes, as well as flue-dust, help to improve its workability. Clay does not part easily with plant-foods: rich in potash, it very often lacks nitrogen.

Maybe you have got a sandy soil in your garden, and in this case you will probably be able to produce earlier crops, but your sandy soil will dry up quickly in the summer. Soils of this sort are hungry and need large quantities of well-rotted dung or compost in order to help them retain moisture. Sedge-peat is very useful also, especially when worked into the top two or three inches. Sands are usually lacking in phosphates and potash, and, generally speaking, they have not much retentive power for plant-foods.

However, it is not always the soils that make such a difference: it is the earth that is underneath, sometimes called the subsoil. For instance, if the subsoil is chalk, then the drainage is perfect. If the subsoil is a heavy clay, a barrier may be formed through which water cannot pass. Waterlogging thus results. Such subsoils need draining carefully and you never get any really good results in the garden until this is carried out. Where it is impossible to use drainpipes, large stones or clinkers may be buried about 18 inches down to help to get the excess soil-water away.

Some people are very much against digging,

and I do not blame them for this. It is a tiring operation. If you do not dig, however, there are tremendous quantities of compost to be made every year which have to be used as a top-dressing, and the wheeling about of tons of compost can be equally tiring. Most people agree to-day that normal digging is quite satisfactory—that is, making a trench about 2 feet wide and then putting into the bottom of the trench an 8-inch layer of the dung or compost that is available. You need at least one 2½-gallon bucketful to the square yard, and preferably more. The soil from the next trench is then dug over to cover the organic matter. I always think that this work is best explained pictorially and I have a free leaflet on it which can be sent to readers who enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

As farmyard manure is so difficult to get, most people make their own compost by rotting down all the vegetable refuse they can obtain—the leaves from trees, the tops of the carrots and beetroot, the haulms of the peas and beans, the tea-leaves and orange-peel from the house, and so on. At my own place we make our heaps about 8 feet square and, for every 6-inch thickness of vegetable refuse we collect, fish-manure is applied at 3 ounces to the square yard. At every fourth layer we omit the fish fertiliser and use a similar quantity of hydrated lime instead.

At the end of three to six months, depending on the time of the year and on the materials composted, the heap is ready to use. It is by then a black sweet-smelling substance, containing the plant-foods and providing the necessary glutinous physical property for binding the soil particles together. We also use sedge-peat, which is far better than ordinary peat and which we buy in bales and bags for the purpose. This is the material that is worked into the top few inches of soil in the spring. In dry weather it is well soaked first.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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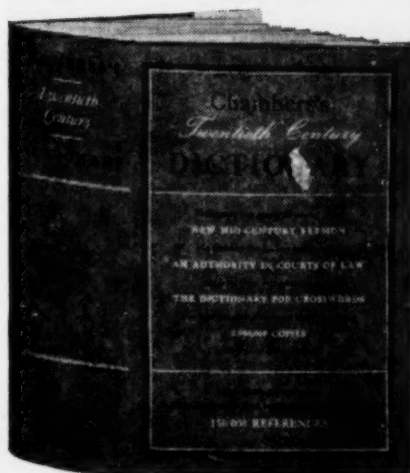
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